OTHELLO
UNVEILED

A

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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[*In preparation. Orders registered.*]

THE RENTALA HOUSE, MYLAPORE, MADRAS.

OTHELLO UNVEILED

BY

RENTALA VENKATA SUBBARAU

B.A., B.L., AUTHOR OF "KAMALA'S LETTERS TO HER HUSBAND"

MADRAS

THE RENTALA HOUSE, MYLAPORE

1906

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U. R. SUNDARAMMA,

Born 31st July, 1888—Died 6th April, 1904.

IN MEMORIAM

SHALL I see thee again, my child, my darling child!
Thy form yet lives, thy silver voice, the friend
And rival of thy finger-lore, methinks
I often hear: thou 'st giv'n my soul new life,
New pow'r, new light, new feeling infinite—
But oh, thou 'rt lost to these mine mortal eyes!
Thou 'rt vanish'd like a fairy in a dream!
Sweet flow'r of six and ten short summers' growth,
Wast cut too soon fro' th' parent stem to endure.
Unhappy thraldom in rude mortal hands
For more than one bare twelvemonth? Wretched he
Who lost thee doubly in a single moon
By wedlock new: thrice wretched me who must
To one world knit in soul, in another breathe!
Tell me, sweet orphan nurs'd on father's love,
Hast thou thy mother join'd and thy brother
Leaving thine infant treasure in thy place—
Kind bondage cheating grief with present bliss—
To illume the darkness of my desolate home?
What happy illusion this delights my soul
In little SUNDAR's form! He bears thy name
And looks thy look, and smiles thy very smile:
Tell me, dear child, art thou in him reborn?
Shall I see thee again, my child, my darling child!

PREFACE

TO every one who takes up this volume, it must at the first sight seem a heavy impertinence, but I trust the scholar and the critic will soon find that it is no production of a charlatan, and even the general reader cannot peruse the Exposition without interest and instruction. The annotations will be found to contain quite a number of explanations* which are boldly conclusive and demand a careful and patient study, while the observations and questions† thrown out here and there for solution must puzzle the best of Shakespearean scholars and drive them to realise the existence of a veil over the picture of this great tragedy. A glance through the Contents will give some idea of the revelations presented in this work, but nothing short of a slow, thoughtful, unprejudiced, whole-souled appreciation can do justice to the author, much less to the great SHAKESPEARE. The willing student will find herein not merely the resolution of riddles and perplexities but a full peep into the life from which the immortal poet has selected his

* See Notes on I. i. 1, 20; ii. 23, 75; iii. 69, 212, 249, 251, 257, 263-4, 269-70: II. i. 26, 50, 76-7, 104, 303; iii. 55, 66, 111, 125, 132-3, 214, 263, 271, 332, 345, 346, 371-2: III. i. 20, 55; iii. 36, 72, 123, 135, 145, 166-7, 232, 278, 285, 338, 386, 388-90, 440-1, 442, 455, 460, 463, 468-9, 479; iv. 45-6: IV i. 1, 23, 37-8, 41, 116, 123, 184, 227, 256; ii. 30, 55-6, 62, 63-5, 112, 156, 171; iii. 4, 22, 34, 102: V. i. 1, 19-20, 31-6, 73, 117; ii. 1, 7, 81, 88, 93, 115-6, 117, 126, 191, 203, 216, 233-4, 241, 294, 301-2, 305, 317, 345, 355.

† See pp. 5, 7, 14, 16, 17, 20, 32, 33, 37, 39, 43, 48, 53, 63, 74, 93, 97, 99, 101, 125, 126, 140, 151, 170, 172, 173, 181, 188, 191, 195, 196, 197, 198, 222, 225, 229, 230, 231.

scenes—a through passport into the private precincts of the human mind. It needs no small power of perception to discover, and no little stretch of imagination to follow and appreciate, the subtle lines of a superb psychological portraiture pencilled by an artist of surpassing skill and omniscience. I have read the picture here in the best style I could command with my feeble pen, and faithfully to the original; and if I have disclosed a bracelet or a brooch, a piano or a painting, which may seem fanciful, I need only say they form no part of the 'essential vesture' of the masterpiece.

To have placed myself *en rapport*, as it were, with the soul of the divine dramatist and revealed the picture vouchsafed to my perception would have been a far easier and simpler task than the preparation and production of this bulky volume: but then, the result would have been less satisfactory to the reader, without the thoughts of the many men of genius who have made the poet's works their especial study. I have found ready access to this previous literature, as well as to other extracts and quotations, in that valuable storehouse of information, *The New Variorum Othello,* to the learned editor of which, I should, in this place, record my grateful obligations. I should likewise express my sincerest apologies for any apparent disrespectfulness, into which in a critical mood I have been betrayed, towards the great scholars whose opinions and explanations I have referred to, and it is in no vein of mock humility I would add that by their side I ever feel my littleness.

To my young friend, Mr. T. V. SUBRAHMANYAM, B. A., already well-known for his excellent contributions to journalism, and my Sunday visitor and friend, Mr. B. S. SUBRAHMANYAM, B. A., whose soul is replete with music and poetry, I cannot sufficiently acknowledge my indebtedness. In no small measure have I felt encour-

aged from time to time by their interest in a work which, on the face of it, is singular and revolutionary: indeed, to the initial impetus of the younger friend, I owe the impulse which has resulted in this publication.

It is nothing strange, though it is sadly ironical, that the author of this work has had no option but to make himself its printer and publisher as well. But now that it is about to see the light, whatever the appreciation it may find, he is filled with a feeling of thankfulness and delight at having reached the conclusion of a full year's laborious task, undertaken as a matter of love and duty, and carried on from day to day with the compositor at the heels. A task less arduous or less soul-absorbing could not have kept him engaged amidst distracting sorrow and disquieting embarassments: and he only prays these should not overpower him before he completes the companion work—"HAMLET" UNVEILED. May he venture to commend himself to the patronage of all lovers of literature, and of the crowned and uncrowned sovereigns of the world, whose support and munificence must ever help the success of all lofty undertakings?

Mylapore, Madras:
1 Feb. 1906

R. V. S.

CORRIGENDA

PAGE	LINE
20 —	47 of the Text, insert a full stop at the end.
20 —	50 of the Text, insert a colon at the end.
29 —	107 of the Text, delete the full stop at the end.
32 —	160 of the Text, insert a comma in place of the semi-colon.
55 —	87 of the Text, for *the* read *thee.*
112 —	17 of the Notes, for *nor* read *and.*
144 —	7, for 'A liberal *heart*' read 'A liberal *hand.*'
203 —	25 of the Notes, for *lust's blood* at the end read *her lust-blood.*
204 —	3 of the Text, for *that snow* read *than snow.*
208 —	45 of the Text, for *proténts* read *porténts.*
216 —	17 of the Notes, delete the word *partial.*
223 —	22 of the Text, insert *Emil.* as the speaker of 'I will not.'
266 —	12, for *even* read *ever.*
290 —	21, for *egotism* read *egoism.*
326 —	15, for *deprecating* read *depreciating.*
470 —	25, after *in the city!* add *Oh, the strumpet!*

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"OTHELLO"

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

DUKE OF VENICE.
BRABANTIO, a senator.
Other Senators.
GRATIANO, brother to Brabantio.
LODOVICO, kinsman to Brabantio.
OTHELLO, a noble Moor in the service of the Venetian state.
CASSIO, his lieutenant.
IAGO, his ancient.
RODERIGO, a Venetian gentleman.
MONTANO, Othello's predecessor in the government of Cyprus.
Clown, servant to Othello.

DESDEMONA, daughter to Brabantio and wife to Othello.
EMILIA, wife to Iago.
BIANCA, mistress to Cassio.
Sailor, Messenger, Herald, Officers, Gentlemen, Musicians, and Attendants.

SCENE: *Venice; a seaport in Cyprus.*

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.— No list is given in the Quarto; but at the end of the play in the First Folio, we find the following:

The Names of the Actors.

Othello, *the Moore.*
Brabantio, *Father to Desdemona.*
Cassio, *an Honourable Lieutenant.*
Iago, *a Villaine.*
Rodorigo, *a gull'd Gentleman.*
Duke of Venice.
Senators.
Montano, *Gouernour of Cyprus.*
Gentlemen of Cyprus.
Lodouico, *and* Gratiano, *two noble Venetians.*
Saylors.
Clowne.

Desdemona, *Wife to Othello.*
Æmilia, *Wife to Iago.*
Bianca, *a Curtezan.*

OTHELLO

THE MOOR OF VENICE

ACT I.

SCENE I. *Venice. A Street.*

Enter RODERIGO *and* IAGO.

Rod. Never tell me; I take it much unkindly
That thou, Iago, who hast had my purse

THE TEXT.—This magnificent tragedy was never printed during the life-time of Shakespeare. The first edition of it was published in quarto form—now known as the First Quarto of *Othello*—by Thomas Walkley in 1622. During the next year, 1623, it appeared in the First Folio in the section of 'Tragedies', pp. 310-19. Other quarto editions followed in 1630, 1635, 1681, 1687 and 1695, while the Second, Third and Fourth Folios appeared in 1632, 1663 and 1685. The four folios are practically identical. The second and subsequent quartos are mere reprints of the First Quarto of 1622, corrected by the text of the Folio and presenting nothing better than a few unimportant alterations and 'sophistications', with not a few typographical errors; so that we have only two really independent texts—the First Quarto and the First Folio. These independent texts were, in all probability, stage copies of the play, though regarding the Folio, Heminge and Condell asserted that they had used the original MS of Shakespeare. Knight calculates that the Folio contains 163 lines more than the Quarto, (presumably additions made by the author), while in the latter there are only about 10 lines not found in the Folio. The most noticeable difference between the two texts lies, however, in the omission or modification, in the Folio, of oaths and adjurations found in the Quarto, such as *'Sblood*, *'Zounds*, *By the Mass*, etc., from which we are led to conclude that the Quarto was printed from an early copy of the play which existed prior to the Statute of 1605 (against the profane use of the name of God in stage-plays, etc.) while the Folio reproduced a copy containing the corrections and additions made by the author after the passing of that Statute. The First Folio undoubtedly gives us the later and better text and is followed in the present volume except where it is otherwise indicated.

As if the strings were thine, shouldst know of this—
Iago. But you'll not hear me. If ever I did dream
Of such a matter, abhor me.

THE DATE OF COMPOSITION.—On this point, Malone's assertion—which, according to Halliwell-Phillips was founded on his inspection of entries in the 'records of the Master of the Revels for 1604 and 1605'—that *Othello* was acted on Hallamas Day (1st Nov.) 1604 in the Banqueting House at Whitehall, is now generally accepted; so that the play must have been composed in 1604 or earlier. Internal evidence based on metrical and æsthetic tests, as well as the general character and spirit of the play, points to the same conclusion and marks it as "one of the group of tragedies of passion", ending in utter confusion and sorrow, produced by Shakespeare in the full maturity of his powers. And we may almost conclude that it was written about the middle of 1604, and that Brabantio's accusation against Othello about the employment of "spells and medicines" and "witchcraft" to steal his daughter and induce her into a surreptitious marriage, and the Duke's reference to "the bloody book of law" making such a proceeding punishable, were readily and particularly suggested to the poet by the Act of Parliament which had just then been passed (sometime between 19th March and 7th July, 1604) against the use of '*witchcrafte, enchantment, charme* or *sorcerie,*' amongst other things, '*to provoke any person to unlawful love,*' as it would have newly attracted and excited public attention (including the poet's), purporting, as it did, to punish the offence more severely than a former, and in all likelihood not well-known, enactment it had repealed.

THE SOURCES OF THE PLOT.—In its merest outlines, the play is based on the 'Story of the Moor of Venice', which is found in the *Hecatommithi*—'Hundred Tales'—of the Italian writer Giraldi Cinthio, published at Venice in 1566. This work was not translated into English until long after Shakespeare's time. The poet must therefore have read the story in the original or in the French version published in 1584, or had it narrated or interpreted to him by a friend. It is however too much to say that, even in the bare outlines of the plot, the drama resembles the meagre Italian tale; so different and fascinating the characters delineated in the tragedy, so free the alteration and expansion of the incidents, and so great the invention of the poet's brain, that the drama is an altogether new and magnificent edifice in which but a few stones of the old humble hut are discernable, here and there, in new and completely chiselled and charming forms, and very often in new positions. Cinthio's tale, given *in extenso* at the end of this play, discloses to the reader how very little the English dramatist is indebted to the Italian story-teller, and how wonderfully magical the power of the poet's assimilative and creative genius which has constructed 'one of the world's most stupendous tragedies' out of a crude record of atrocities.

Rod. Thou told'st me thou didst hold him in thy hate.
Iago. Despise me, if I do not. Three great ones of the city,
In personal suit to make me his lieutenant,
Off-capp'd to him; and, by the faith of man,

SCENE I.—Here, as often in Shakespeare, the scene commences abruptly in the middle of a conversation. The reader will in every case find it not only helpful but necessary for a correct understanding of the situation to imagine the previous dialogue in detail. Where the imagination fails or proceeds in a wrong groove, difficulties crop up which obscure the meaning and oftentimes misrepresent the motives and character of the speakers. A few questions may be suggested here for solution. These, together with many others which puzzle the critic throughout the play, will be found fully answered in the Exposition which follows it. Q. 1. Indicate Iago's movements during the half hour preceding this scene and give in detail the conversation which took place between him and Roderigo before they are brought within our hearing. Q. 2. Why does Roderigo assume that Iago must have had previous knowledge of the intended elopement and marriage of Desdemona with the Moor? Q. 3. When and how did Iago get Roderigo under his thumb and what were the circumstances which placed Iago apparently in a position to help Roderigo in his suit and induced the latter to accept it at any cost?

1. *Never tell me.* Most modern editors, following the quarto reading, commence this line with 'Tush'—

"Tush! never tell me; I take it much unkindly"—

and they likewise retain the oath in line 4, altering the rhythmical arrangement:

"'Sblood, but you will not hear me:
If ever I did dream of such a matter,
Abhor me."

There can be no doubt that Shakespeare intentionally omitted the interjection 'tush' in the copy used for the Folio, with a view to make it clear that Roderigo had already fallen so helplessly into the hands of Iago that he could scarcely assume a tone of reproach or indignation, but could only utter a mild and piteous complaint; especially did this omission become necessary when Iago's protestation which follows and throws the murmuring victim into the mood for listening had to be made without the weight of the oath—*'Sblood*, i. e., God's blood—which the quarto had contained. Q. How did Iago come to know at all about the secret wedding, or that Othello was at 'the Sagittary'?

3. *This.* That is, Othello wooing Desdemona and his love-intrigue with her. That thou shouldst know of this *and not tell me about it.*

9. *Off-capp'd.* Stood, cap in hand, soliciting him (Theobald).

I know my price, I am worth no worse a place:
But he, as loving his own pride and purposes,
Evades them, with a bombast circumstance
Horribly stuff'd with epithets of war;
And, in conclusion,
Nonsuits my mediators; for, 'Certes,' says he,
'I have already chose my officer.'
And what was he?
Forsooth, a great arithmetician,
One Michael Cassio, a Florentine,
A fellow almost damn'd in a fair wife;
That never set a squadron in the field,
Nor the division of a battle knows
More than a spinster; unless the bookish theoric,

11. *As loving ... purposes.* Preferring to indulge his natural pride and to carry out his own purposes. Q. What purposes?

12, 13. *Evades ... war.* Avoids their request by making them a long, rambling, bombastic speech, full of military terms and technicalities.

Circumstance — circumlocution.

14. This line is found only in the quartos but not in the Folio.

15. *Nonsuits.* A legal term—rejects the suit, i. e., request of.

Certes — certainly, in truth.

18. *Arithmetician.* Florentines were noted to be clever arithmeticians and book-keepers.

20. *A fellow ... wife.* This line has sorely exercised the ingenuity of critics and commentators, who have proposed various emendations in place of 'wife', such as '*wise*', '*life*', '*strife*', '*guise*', '*phyz*', '*face*', etc. At the end of five quarto pages of quotations from the various commentators, Furness, in the *New Variorum* Edition of *Othello* is content to re-echo Dr. Johnson's words: "This is one of the passages which must, for the present, be resigned to corruption and obscurity. I have nothing that I can, with any approach to confidence, propose." The plain and simple meaning is that Cassio is a fellow *who is very near contracting a marriage whereby he will be* (not blessed but) 'damned in a fair wife'. The reference is to the rumour that Cassio was going to marry Bianca, the courtesan. Iago afterwards says to Cassio himself: "Faith, the cry goes that you shall marry her."—IV. i.

22. *The division of a battle.* The arrangement of a battalion. Cf. *Mac.* V. vi. 4, 'Lead our first battle.'

23. *Spinster.* A girl, an unmarried woman.

Unless ... theoric. Except it be the theory learnt from books.

Wherein the tonguèd consuls can propose
As masterly as he: mere prattle, without practice,
Is all his soldiership. But he, sir, had th' election;
And I, of whom his eyes had seen the proof
At Rhodes, at Cyprus, and on other grounds
Christen'd and heathen, must be be-lee'd and calm'd
By debitor-and-creditor, this counter-caster:
He, in good time, must his lieutenant be,
And I—God bless the mark!—his Moorship's ancient.

Rod. By heaven, I rather would have been his hangman.

Iago. Why, there 's no remedy; 'tis the curse of service,
Preferment goes by letter and affection,

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24. *Tonguèd consuls.* The quarto reading is '*togèd* consuls' which several editors adopt taking *togèd* to imply a contrast with *soldiership*, the toga or gown being emblematical of peace. The folio reading '*tonguèd*', i. e., talkative, is more in harmony with the words which follow—'mere *prattle*, without practice.' *Consuls*—counsellors. The reference is evidently to members of the Venetian council.

Propose—speak, discourse.

29. The quarto reading is '*Christian* and heathen.'

29,30. *Be-leed ... counter-caster.* Supplanted by this fellow who is only fit to be a book-keeper and accountant. *Be-leed*—put to the leeward. A ship immediately under the lee of another ship has the wind taken out of her sails and is practically like a ship in a calm. *Debitor-and-creditor*—the title of certain ancient books on book-keeping. Here it means 'one that enters items of debit and credit in a ledger', 'a book-keeper.' *Counter-caster*—one who reckons by help of *counters*.

32. *God bless the mark!* This is the quarto reading. The folio omits 'God'. The expression prepares the hearer for a surprising statement. 'Mark' appears originally to have referred to any mark on the body superstitiously believed to be indicative of good or bad fortune; and the exclamation was made in the hope of averting evil.

Moorship's ancient. 'Moorship' coined on the analogy of 'lordship' is indicative of scorn. *Ancient*—ensign or standard-bearer.

35. *By letter.* By recommendation of powerful friends (Johnson). Q. Why does Iago say this though only two minutes back he stated that Othello had refused to listen to all recommendation on his behalf? What is the appropriateness of the word '*affection*' which follows?

And not by old gradation, where each second
Stood heir to the first. Now, sir, be judge yourself,
Whether I in any just term am affin'd
To love the Moor.
Rod. I would not follow him then.
Iago. Oh, sir, content you;
I follow him to serve my turn upon him:
We cannot all be masters, nor all masters
Cannot be truly follow'd. You shall mark
Many a duteous and knee-crooking knave,
That, doting on his own obsequious bondage,
Wears out his time, much like his master's ass,
For nought but provender, and when he's old, cashier'd;
Whip me such honest knaves. Others there are
Who, trimm'd in forms and visages of duty,
Keep yet their hearts attending on themselves,

---

36. *By old gradation.* By the rule of promotion established by ancient practice, i. e., by seniority in service.

38. *In any ... affin'd.* Bound by any just tie or moral obligation.

40. *Oh, sir, content you.* Ah, don't you feel perplexed by my serving the Moor in spite of it—I will tell you why I do so.

41. *To serve ... him.* To do what I can to injure him in return. His turn is now over as he has done me what harm he could; it is now my turn to do him harm. Iago makes it clear that he and Othello are no better than enemies endeavouring to injure each other.

42, 43. *Nor all masters ... followed.* Double negative. And it is not all masters that can be served truly and faithfully.

43. *You shall mark.* (I am sure) you will mark. It is such a common occurrence that you cannot possibly miss to mark it.

44. *Knee-crooking*—Knee-bending, servile.
Knave—used for *servant*, with a sly mixture of contempt (Johnson).

45. *Doting ... bondage.* Quite delighted with his servile thraldom.

47. *For nought but provender.* For nothing more than daily food.
Cashiered (Is) cashiered, dismissed from service.

48. *Whip me ... knaves.* Whip (for) me such faithful servants. It will give me great gratification to see such fools whipped. Iago scoffs at their stupid fidelity.

49. *Trimm'd ... visages.* Wearing the outward appearance.

50. *Hearts ... themselves.* Their bodies wait upon their masters but their hearts wait upon (serve) themselves.

And, throwing but shows of service on their lords,
Do well thrive by them, and when they have lin'd their
coats
Do themselves homage: these fellows have some soul;
And such a one do I profess myself.
For, sir,
It is as sure as you are Roderigo,
Were I the Moor, I would not be Iago.
In following him, I follow but myself;
Heaven is my judge, not I for love and duty,
But seeming so, for my peculiar end:
For when my outward action doth demonstrate
The native act and figure of my heart
In compliment extern, 'tis not long after
But I will wear my heart upon my sleeve
For daws to peck at; I am not what I am.

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51. *Throwing ... lords.* Merely pretending to serve their masters.

52. *Lin'd their coats.* 'Feathered their nests', 'enriched themselves.'

53. *Do themselves homage.* Serve themselves instead of others. *Soul* — spirit.

57. *Were I ... Iago.* The meaning is: 'If I had the Moor's nature, (if I were an honest fool like the Moor), I should not be acting cleverly as I am now doing.' Iago distinguishes between 'honest knaves' and others and takes pride in asserting that he belongs to the latter class.

59. *Not I.* I do not follow him.

60. *My peculiar end.* My own particular purpose.

61, 62. *Demonstrate ... heart.* Reveal the real nature (native activity) and character of my heart.

63. *In compliment extern.* In my outward acts and shows of civility.

63–65. *'Tis not ... to peck at.* You may soon after expect me to wear my heart upon my sleeve as a prey to the most stupid of birds, the jackdaws; you may be sure I shall soon be an open-hearted simpleton who will let even fools understand his feelings and intentions. "*To wear one's heart upon one's sleeve*—to expose one's secret intentions to general notice; the reference being to the custom of tying your lady's favour to your sleeve, and thus exposing the secret of the heart."—*Brewer.*

65. *I am not what I am.* 'I am not that inwardly which I am outwardly; I am not really what I seem to be, viz., a devoted servant of the Moor.

Rod. What a full fortune does the thick-lips owe,
If he can carry't thus!
Iago. Call up her father,
Rouse him; make after him, poison his delight,
Proclaim him in the streets; incense her kinsmen,
And, though he in a fertile climate dwell,
Plague him with flies: though that his joy be joy,
Yet throw such chances of vexation on 't,
As it may lose some colour.
Rod. Here is her father's house; I'll call aloud.
Iago. Do, with like timorous accent and dire yell
As when, by night and negligence, the fire
Is spied in populous cities.
Rod. What, ho, Brabantio! Signior Brabantio, ho!
Iago. Awake! what, ho, Brabantio! thieves! thieves! thieves!
Look to your house, your daughter, and your bags!
Thieves! thieves!

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66. *Full fortune.* This is the quarto reading. The folio has 'fall' in place of 'full—evidently a misprint.

The thick-lips. Othello. Roderigo exaggerates the racial peculiarity of the Moor and refers to him as 'the thick-lips', in contempt. It does not necessarily imply that Othello has very thick lips and is a veritable negro.

68. The first *him* refers to Brabantio, the second to Othello.

69. *Proclaim him*—as an offender against the laws of Venice.

70. *Though ... dwell.* Though he is now in the enjoyment of so much happiness.

71. *Plague ... flies.* Vex and harass him with petty annoyances. The reference is to the plagues sent by God on the fertile country of Egypt when the King would not allow the Israelites to depart. (*Exodus*, VII *et seq.*)

Though ... joy. Though his happiness be bright.

72. *Chances of vexation.* 'Possibilities of vexation which might discolour Othello's joy. The quarto reading is '*changes* of vexation.'

75. *Timorous accent*—terrified voice. *Dire yell*—dreadful shrieking.

76. *By night and negligence—At* night and *through* negligence,

BRABANTIO *appears above, at a window.*

Bra. What is the reason of this terrible summons?
What is the matter there?
Rod. Signior, is all your family within?
Iago. Are your doors lock'd?
Bra. Why, wherefore ask you this?
Iago. Sir, you're robb'd; for shame, put on your gown;
Your heart is burst, you have lost half your soul:
Even now, now, very now, an old black ram
Is tupping your white ewe. Arise, arise;
Awake the snorting citizens with the bell,
Or else the devil will make a grandsire of you.
Arise, I say.
Bra. What, have you lost your wits?
Rod. Most reverend signior, do you know my voice?
Bra. Not I; what are you?
Rod. My name is Roderigo.
Bra. The worser welcome;
I have charg'd thee not to haunt about my doors.

86. The quarto reading is "*'Zounds*, sir, you're robb'd.' *'Zounds*—a corruption of 'God's wounds'. It must be noted here that Iago speaks in a false voice so as to avoid the danger of being recognised. Iago is well-known to Lodovico and Gratiano (IV. i. and V. i.) and presumably to Brabantio. In any case, he would assume a false tone both to avoid a possible danger of identification and to feel himself quite free to talk to the senator in the most indecent language. Of course, he takes care to slink away from the spot by the time Brabantio comes down.

For shame, put on your gown. Knight interprets this to mean '*for decency,* put on your gown', while Theobald thinks the reference is to Brabantio's senatorial gown. Knight's is undoubtedly the correct interpretation. Iago alarms Brabantio with the news that a great calamity has happened to him and hurries him to go out and look about it *at once* without the least delay. 'You have no time for donning your full dress, just put on your night-gown for decency's sake and come down.'

90. *Snorting*—Snoring.

With the bell—by ordering the great bell of the city to be rung.

91. *The devil.* Iago's contemptuous reference to Othello who is not fair-complexioned like the Venetians.

In honest plainness thou hast heard me say
My daughter is not for thee; and now, in madness,
Being full of supper and distempering draughts,
Upon malicious knavery dost thou come
To start my quiet.

Rod. Sir, sir, sir,—

Bra. But thou must needs be sure
My spirit and my place have in them power
To make this bitter to thee.

Rod. Patience, good sir.

Bra. What tell'st thou me of robbing? this is Venice;
My house is not a grange.

Rod. Most grave Brabantio,
In simple and pure soul I come to you.

Iago. Sir, you are one of those that will not serve God, if the devil bid you. Because we come to do you service, and you think we are ruffians, you'll have your daughter covered with a Barbary horse, you'll have your nephews neigh to you, you'll have coursers for cousins and gennets for germans.

Bra. What profane wretch art thou?

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99. *Distempering*—disordering, intoxicating.

100. *Upon malicious knavery.* The quarto reading is 'Upon malicious *bravery*' and almost all editors adopt it, taking it to mean 'with the evil desire of braving and insulting me'. The folio reading gives the better sense. 'Upon malicious knavery' means 'with a wicked and villainous design conceived out of malice', 'sounding this wicked alarm to satisfy the malice you bear against me on account of my prohibition'. Brabantio, as soon as he finds out that it was Roderigo who awoke him, hopes and thinks that the scandalous report just made concerning his daughter was but the malicious and villainous concoction of the disappointed man under the influence of drink.

101. *To start my quiet.* To startle (disturb) my rest (sleep).

106. *Grange.* A lonely farm-house.

112. *Nephews.* Used here for 'grandsons' or 'lineal discendants.' So also *cousins*.

113. *Gennets.* A gennet or jennet is a small Spanish horse.
Germans—'relations', 'kindred'.

114. *Profane.* 'Coarse-spoken,'

Iago. I am one, sir, that comes to tell you, your daughter and the Moor are making the beast with two backs.

Bra. Thou art a villain.

Iago. You are — a senator.

Bra. This thou shalt answer; I know thee, Roderigo.

Rod. Sir, I will answer any thing. But, I beseech you,
If't be your pleasure and most wise consent,
(As partly I find it is), that your fair daughter,
At this odd-even and dull watch o' the night,
Transported, with no worse nor better guard
But with a knave of common hire, a gondolier,
To the gross clasps of a lascivious Moor,—
If this be known to you and your allowance,
We then have done you bold and saucy wrongs;
But if you know not this, my manners tell me
We have your wrong rebuke. Do not believe
That, from the sense of all civility,
I thus would play and trifle with your reverence:
Your daughter, if you have not given her leave,
I say again, hath made a gross revolt;
Tying her duty, beauty, wit, and fortunes
In an extravagant and wheeling stranger

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118. *You are — a senator* and therefore feel quite safe from having your abusive language returned.

123. *Odd-even ... night.* The interval between twelve at night and one in the morning (Henley). 'The *even* of night is *midnight*, the time when night is divided into *even* parts' (Johnson). Malone takes it as denoting that it was just approaching to or just past midnight. Furness makes the suggestion—the best of all—that the phrase indicates 'a time when there is no distinguishing between *odd* and *even*', which is the case at *midnight*, the calculation of time commencing at *zero*.

124. *Transported*—(be) transported.

126. *Clasps*—embraces. *Lascivious*—lustful.

128. *Saucy*—insolent, outrageous.

131. *From*—away from, contrary to.

136. *Extravagant*—used in the literal sense—wandering, vagrant. Implies that Othello is a homeless wanderer, now here, now there.

Of here and every where. Straight satisfy yourself:
If she be in her chamber or your house,
Let loose on me the justice of the state
For thus deluding you.

Bra. Strike on the tinder, ho!
Give me a taper! call up all my people!—
This accident is not unlike my dream;
Belief of it oppresses me already.—
Light, I say! light! [*Exit above.*

Iago. Farewell; for I must leave you.
It seems not meet, nor wholesome to my place,
To be produc'd—as, if I stay, I shall—
Against the Moor: for, I do know, the state,
However this may gall him with some check,
Cannot with safety cast him, for he's embark'd
With such loud reason to the Cyprus wars,
(Which even now stand in act), that, for their souls,
Another of his fathom they have none,
To lead their business: in which regard,
Though I do hate him as I do hell-pains,
Yet, for necessity of present life,
I must show out a flag and sign of love,
Which is indeed but sign. That you shall surely find him
Lead to the Sagittary the raisèd search;
And there will I be with him. So, farewell. [*Exit.*

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143. *Belief ... already.* I am oppressed with the belief that my dream was a dream of truth. Q. Was the dream a pure accident or were there any circumstances which led to it?

148. *Check*—rebuke.

149. *He's embarked to.* It is settled that he should set out on (take part in the conduct of).

151. *Stand in act.* Are in progress.

154. *Hell-pains.* The torments of hell.

158. *The Sagittary.* Knight's conjecture that this refers to "the residence at the arsenal of the commanding officers of the navy and army of the republic" is clearly incorrect. In I. iii. 121, Othello says to Iago, "Ancient, conduct them; you best know the place", indicating that it is

Enter, below, BRABANTIO, *and* Servants *with torches.*

Bra. It is too true an evil: gone she is;
And what's to come of my despisèd time
Is nought but bitterness.—Now, Roderigo,
Where didst thou see her?—Oh, unhappy girl!
With the Moor, say'st thou?—Who would be a father!
How didst thou know 'twas she?—Oh, she deceives me
Past thought!—What said she to you?—Get more tapers!
Raise all my kindred!—Are they married, think you?

Rod. Truly, I think they are.

Bra. Oh, heaven!—How got she out?—Oh, treason of the blood!—

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not the Arsenal or any well-known place but one which the Duke's attendants might not easily find without Iago's guidance. It is also clear that it is not an altogether unknown or unheard-of place as only a minute since (I. iii. 115) Othello prayed the Duke to "send for the lady to the Sagittary." It certainly cannot be a public inn for it would be most ill-suited for a secret marriage. As the Cowden-Clarkes have suggested, Shakespeare undoubtedly meant by 'the Sagittary,' neither the Venetian arsenal nor an inn, but a private house bearing the classical name (and possibly the figure) of 'the Sagittary,' specially engaged for the secret wedding. From I. ii. 45, it is clear that Othello was not at his usual lodging and the very difficulty of finding him indicated by the senate's "several quests" sent in search of him, as well as Cassio's subsequent question "What makes he here?", implies that the general was in an unwonted place of resort.

The raisèd search. The party (of relatives and followers) which Brabantio will collect to go in search of Othello.

161. *What's ... despisèd time.* That which will follow this evil during the remainder of my life which has now become worthless to me (in consequence of this calamity which deprives me of my only happiness). *Despisèd time*—time of no value (Johnson). Heath interprets 'despised' to refer to the contempt to which the misconduct of his only daughter would expose Brabantio during the remaining part of his life; but it is clear that the old father's grief is not so much in view of the disgrace which awaits him as on account of the bitter emptiness of his future life. As a matter of fact, the match proves 'mortal to him' very soon.

166. *Past thought.* Beyond all imagining.

169. *Oh, treason ... blood!* Oh, that my own flesh and blood should thus rebel against me! Cf. Shylock's exclamation 'My own flesh and blood to rebel!' (*M. of V.* III. i. 37).

Fathers, from hence trust not your daughters' minds
By what you see them act.—Is there not charms
By which the property of youth and maidhood
May be abus'd? Have you not read, Roderigo,
Of some such thing?

Rod. Yes, sir, I have indeed.

Bra. Call up my brother.—Oh, would you had had her!—
Some one way, some another.—Do you know
Where we may apprehend her and the Moor?

Rod. I think I can discover him, if you please
To get good guard and go along with me.

Bra. Pray you, lead on. At every house I'll call;
I may command at most.—Get weapons, ho!
And raise some special officers of night.—
On, good Roderigo; I'll deserve your pains. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II. *Another Street.*

Enter OTHELLO, IAGO, *and* Attendants *with torches.*

Iago. Though in the trade of war I have slain men.
Yet do I hold it very stuff o' the conscience

172, 173. *By which ... abused.* By which the faculties of a young virgin may be infatuated and made subject to illusions and false imagination. (Johnson). *Abused*—perverted, deceived.

175. *Would ... her.* I wish I had consented to your marrying her. Q. Did *she* consent to marry him?

181. *At most* (of them).

182. *Special officers ... night.* Officers specially appointed for the night-time. '*Night*' is the quarto reading; the folio has 'might'—evidently a misprint. Malone quotes Lewkenor's *The Commonwealth and Government of Venice* (a translation from the Italian) to show that in the city certain officers were specially appointed to guard the peace during the night-time.

183. *I'll ... pains.* I shall prove myself worthy of the trouble you have taken and are to take on my behalf. 'I will requite you worthily.' Q. How?

2. *Stuff.* Substance or essence (Johnson),

To do no cóntriv'd murder; I lack iniquity
Sometimes to do me service: nine or ten times
I had thought to have yerk'd him here under the ribs.
Oth. 'Tis better as it is.
Iago. Nay, but he prated,
And spoke such scurvy and provoking terms
Against your honour
That, with the little godliness I have,
I did full hard forbear him. But, I pray you, sir,
Are you fast married? Be assur'd of this,
That the magnifico is much belov'd,
And hath in his effect a voice potential
As double as the duke's; he will divorce you,
Or put upon you what restraint and grievance
The law, with all his might to enforce it on,
Will give him cable.
Oth. Let him do his spite;
My services which I have done the signiory
Shall out-tongue his complaints. 'Tis yet to know,—

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3. *Cóntriv'd*—deliberate.

5. *Yerk'd him.* Struck him, given him a smart blow. *Him* in this line and *he* in the next refer *not* to Brabantio, as some have supposed, but to *Roderigo* (within striking distance of whom, Iago tells Othello, he was when he awoke Brabantio and informed him of the flight of his daughter). Knight says 'Iago is preparing Othello for the appearance of Roderigo with Brabantio, which he does *by representing that Roderigo has communicated to him his intention to apprise Desdemona's father of her flight,* and that he resented his expressions towards Othello.' The portion in italics is however an erroneous supposition. Q. Give in detail the information communicated by Iago to Othello just before the commencement of this scene.

10. *Did full hard forbear him.* Spared him, i. e., let him alone with very great difficulty.

14. *Double.* Strong, powerful (owing to wealth and popularity).

15. *Put ... grievance.* Make you suffer imprisonment and other grievous punishments.

17. *Will give him cable* (for). Will allow him.

His spite. 'Whatever his bitterness may dictate.'

19. *Yet to know.* Yet to be known.

Which, when I know that boasting is an honour,
I shall promulgate—I fetch my life and being
From men of royal siege, and my demerits
May speak (unbonneted) to as proud a fortune
As this that I have reach'd; for know, Iago,
But that I love the gentle Desdemona,
I would not my unhousèd free condition
Put into circumscription and confine
For the sea's worth. But look! what lights come yond?

Enter CASSIO, *and certain* Officers *with torches.*

Iago. Those are the raisèd father and his friends;
You were best go in.

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22. *Men of royal siege.* 'Men who have sat on royal thrones' (Johnson). *Siege*—literally 'seat', thence *rank,* because people sat at table and elsewhere in order of precedence.' Cf. *M. for M.* IV. ii. 101, 'upon the very siege of justice' & *Ham.* IV. vii. 77, 'unworthiest siege.'

Demerits. Merits, deserts. Cf. *Cor.* I. i. 276.

23. *Unbonneted.* This word is placed within parentheses in the Folio, and various emendations and interpretations have been suggested. The plain and simple meaning is: 'unbonneted as I am.' Othello says: 'It is yet a fact unknown that I am of royal descent, and, though I do not, like the Venetian noblemen, wear a bonnet as a badge of aristocratic birth, my demerits, i. e., merits or claims by virtue of my birth, may speak to (will reveal) as proud a fortune as this that I have reached by marrying Desdemona.' In the very next clause, Othello plainly refers to and repudiates the supposition—which might be made against him, in ignorance of his royal birth and claims—that he married Desdemona to reach a fortune. [At Venice the *bonnet,* as well as the toge, is a badge of aristocratic honours to this day.' A.C. in *Var.'21.* — Steevens].

26. *My unhous'd free condition.* The freedom of my bachelor estate. *Unhoused*—'free from domestic cares' (Johnson). 'Not tied to a household and family' (Schmidt).

27. *Circumscription*—restraint. *Confine*—limitation.

28. *The sea's worth.* 'All that the sea contains'; all the treasures of the sea. Clarence's dream in *Richard III.* describes these as follows:

"Wedges of gold, great anchors, heaps of pearls,
Inestimable stones, unvalued jewels,
All scattered in the bosom of the sea."

Othello says: 'Were it not that I really love Desdemona, I would not for all the treasures of the ocean have trammelled myself with a wife,'

Oth. Not I; I must be found:
My parts, my title, and my perfect soul
Shall manifest me rightly. Is it they?
Iago. By Janus, I think no.
Oth. The servants of the duke? and my lieutenant?
The goodness of the night upon you, friends!
What is the news?
Cas. The duke does greet you, general,
And he requires your haste-post-haste appearance,
Even on the instant.
Oth. What is the matter, think you?
Cas. Something from Cyprus, as I may divine.
It is a business of some heat; the galleys
Have sent a dozen sequent messengers

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31. *Parts.* Schmidt and Rolfe interpret this to mean *merits.* Furness understands by the word rather the endowments of nature, his natural gifts, like '*your sum of parts*' in *Ham.* IV. vii. 74. There is no doubt the reference in the text is to '*qualities inherited by birth,*' and we may almost read '*birth*' for '*parts.*' This will become clear when we note the report, given by Iago to Othello, of Roderigo's scurvy and provoking language [Q. Depict this in detail] and the cool reply with which Othello met it: and now, when Iago advises Othello to conceal himself, the brave and honourable general discards the suggestion and says: "Not I; I must be found." And he more or less reiterates his reply that the revelation he shall presently make regarding his royal descent will manifest him in the right light, by disclosing his natural (noble and honourable) qualities, his title (and claims by birth to a proud fortune) and his perfect soul (in having married Desdemona out of the purest love and not from any mercenary motives). The reference certainly is to Othello's parts or natural qualities (which the revelation regarding his royal birth will disclose) and his title (claims by birth)—which were yet un-known—*not* to his talents and abilities and his position as commander-in-chief, both of which were well-known to everybody and cannot be expected to manifest him rightly, i. e., in a new and real light.

33. *By Janus.* 'Two-headed Janus.' *M. of V.* I. i. 50. 'There is great propriety in making the double Iago swear by Janus, who had two faces.' (Warburton). These faces were oftentimes contrasted in antique images—as young and old, smiling and wrinkled, etc.

37. *Haste-post-haste.* Immediate. An ancient form of superscription written on urgent covers.

40. *Heat.* Urgency. So, '*hotly*' in l. 44 = urgently.

This very night at one another's heels,
And many of the consuls, rais'd and met,
Are at the duke's already: you have been hotly call'd
for;
When, being not at your lodging to be found,
The senate hath sent about three several quests
To search you out.

Oth. 'Tis well I am found by you,
I will but spend a word here in the house,
And go with you. [*Exit.*

Cas. Ancient, what makes he here?

Iago. 'Faith, he to-night hath boarded a land carack
If it prove lawful prize, he's made for ever.

Cas. I do not understand.

Iago. He's married.

Cas. To who?

Re-enter OTHELLO.

Iago. Marry, to—Come, captain, will you go?

Oth. Have with you.

Cas. Here comes another troop to seek for you.

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43. *Consuls.* Councillors, senators.

49—52. *Ancient, what makes ... To who?* No critic has endeavoured to remove the delicate veil which the poet has cunningly cast over the situation in connection with the secret marriage. What wonder if the drama has not been correctly understood and the characters depicted therein have not been rightly comprehended? The following and other connected questions will be found fully solved in the Exposition which follows the play. Q. 1. Is Cassio really ignorant of Othello's secret marriage? If he is, how does it happen, for he "went very oft" between Othello and Desdemona—III. iii.? If he is in the secret, why does he pretend ignorance? Q. 2. If, as we are afterwards told in III. iii., Cassio had carried on the negotiations between Othello and Desdemona, when and how did Iago get into the business? Q. 3. What is Iago's share in the arrangements made for the secret marriage?

50. *A land carack.* 'What on land is as valuable as a carack at sea.' A *carack* is a large ship of burden, a galleon.

51. *Lawful prize.* Legal capture.
He's made for ever. His good fortune is secured for life.

53. *Have with you.* Have *me* with you; I am ready to go with you.

Enter BRABANTIO, RODERIGO, *and* Officers *with torches and weapons.*

Iago. It is Brabantio.— General, be advis'd;
He comes to bad intent.
Oth. Holla! stand there!
Rod. Signior, it is the Moor.
Bra. Down with him, thief!
[*They draw on both sides.*
Iago. You, Roderigo! come, sir, I am for you.
Oth. Keep up your bright swords, for the dew will rust them.—
Good signior, you shall more command with years
Than with your weapons.
Bra. Oh, thou foul thief, where hast thou stow'd my daughter?
Damn'd as thou art, thou hast enchanted her;
For I'll refer me to all things of sense,
If she in chains of magic were not bound,
Whether a maid so tender, fair, and happy,
So opposite to marriage that she shunn'd
The wealthy curlèd darlings of our nation,
Would ever have, to incur a general mock,
Run from her guardage to the sooty bosom
Of such a thing as thou,—to fear, not to delight.
Judge me the world, if 'tis not gross in sense
That thou hast practis'd on her with foul charms,

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55. *Be advised.* Be cool and cautious. (Johnson).

59. *Keep up your bright swords ... them.* Said with good-humoured sarcasm. 'It is enough you have shown us your bright swords; sheath them again—the dew will rust them, for surely I am not going to permit any fighting here.'

62. *Stowed*—[slang]—put away out of sight; concealed.

67. *Opposite.* 'Opposed,' 'disinclined.'

68. *Curled.* 'Elegant,' 'handsome.'

70. *Guardage.* 'Guardianship.'

72. *Judge me the world.* 'Let the world judge for me' (Abbott). *Gross in sense.* 'Palpable to reason.'

Abus'd her delicate youth with drugs or minerals
That weaken motion. I'll have 't disputed on;
'Tis probable and palpable to thinking.
I therefore apprehend and do attach thee
For an abuser of the world, a practiser
Of arts inhibited and out of warrant.—
Lay hold upon him: if he do resist,
Subdue him at his peril.
Oth. Hold your hands,
Both you of my inclining, and the rest;
Were it my cue to fight, I should have known it
Without a prompter.—Where will you that I go
To answer this your charge?
Bra. To prison, till fit time
Of law and course of direct session
Call thee to answer.

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75. *Weaken motion.* 'Impair the faculties' (Ritson). 'Subdue the impulse of affection, vanquish inclination' (The Cowden-Clarkes). 'Weaken *notion*', i. e., understanding power, is Theobald's emendation. '*Waken* motion', i.e., excite passion, is suggested by Hanmer. 'Motion' is clearly used here in the sense of '*moving power*' or '*action*.' '*Weaken motion*' conveys to my mind the simple meaning—'impair the power of moving, i. e., acting, according to one's own will and inclination'; 'impair the power of moving *away from* the object which fascinates, so as to save oneself'; 'impair the power of independent thought and action.' Cf. I. iii. 95. Philtres or love-potions were formerly, as they are still by some, supposed to have the power of perverting judgment and procuring fondness or dotage towards the persons who administered them. Brabantio means to say that the power of moving or turning away from such a person as Othello, which Desdemona would naturally have exercised, had been subdued by drugs and minerals.

Disputed on. Discussed and decided.

79. *Out of warrant.* Not sanctioned by law; illegal.

83. *Cue.* Hint. A theatrical word applied to 'the last words of an actor's speech prefixed to the speech of the next actor to let him know when he is to come on the stage.' *Were it my cue,* etc.—'If, in this matter, the action of Brabantio suggests my fighting with him, I should have drawn my sword long ago without needing your example.'

85, 86. *Till fit time ... session.* 'Till the time prescribed by law and by the regular course of judicial procedure' (Furness).

Oth. What if I do obey?
How may the duke be therewith satisfied,
Whose messengers are here about my side,
Upon some present business of the state,
To bring me to him?

1 *Officer.* 'Tis true, most worthy signior,
The duke 's in council, and your noble self,
I am sure, is sent for.

Bra. How! the duke in council!
In this time of the night!—Bring him away;
Mine 's not an idle cause: the duke himself,
Or any of my brothers of the state,
Cannot but feel this wrong as 'twere their own;
For if such actions may have passage free,
Bond-slaves and pagans shall our statesmen be.
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE III. *A council-chamber.*

The DUKE *and* Senators *sitting at a table;* Officers *attending.*

Duke. There is no composition in these news
That gives them credit.

87, 88. *What* will be the consequence *if I do obey* you and go to prison? Shall I not be disobeying the duke, etc.

95. *Idle.* Frivolous, unimportant.

95-99. *The duke himself ... shall our statesmen be.* Brabantio means to say: 'The duke himself and my fellow-councillors are sure to feel this as a wrong done to themselves and punish it; for if deeds (wrongs) like this are suffered to go unpunished, it is certain that bond-slaves and pagans (like Othello) will (soon lose all fear of punishment and by rapid and unchecked encroachments) become our statesmen, i. e., the guides and powers of our state.' 'If we now permit this bond-slave, this pagan Othello, to encroach on our homes in this fashion and deprive us of our daughters, then we may be sure his class will soon get bold enough to aspire to our offices and eventally drive us out of them and sit at the helm of the state.' Brabantio, in his bitterly angry mood feels the highest contempt for Othello and regards him as no better than a bond-slave and heathen, though he is neither at the time.

1. *Composition.* 'Consistency,' 'congruity.'

1 *Sen.* Indeed, they are disproportion'd;
My letters say a hundred and seven galleys.
Duke. And mine, a hundred and forty.
2 *Sen.* And mine, two hundred:
But though they jump not on a just account,—
As in these cases, where the aim reports,
'Tis oft with difference—yet do they all confirm
A Turkish fleet, and bearing up to Cyprus.
Duke. Nay, it is possible enough to judgment:
I do not so secure me in the error,
But the main article I do approve
In fearful sense.
Sailor. [*Within*] What, ho! what, ho! what, ho!
1 *Officer.* A messenger from the galleys.

Enter a Sailor.

Duke. Now, what's the business?
Sailor. The Turkish preparation makes for Rhodes;
So was I bid report here to the state
By Signior Angelo.
Duke. How say you by this change?
1 *Sen.* This cannot be,
By no assay of reason; 'tis a pageant,
To keep us in false gaze. When we consider
The importancy of Cyprus to the Turk,
And let ourselves again but understand,
That as it more concerns the Turk than Rhodes,
So may he with more facile question bear it,

5. *Jump.* Agree. *Just*—exact.

6. *Where the aim reports.* Where the report is made 'not by certain knowledge, but by aim or conjecture' (Johnson).

10. *I do not ... error.* 'I do not lay aside anxiety on account of the discrepancy' (Purnell).

17, 18. *Cannot be by no assay of reason.* Double negative.
Assay—test. *Pageant*—show, pretence.

23. *With more facile question bear it.* 'With greater facility of

For that it stands not in such warlike brace,
But altogether lacks the abilities
That Rhodes is dress'd in,—if we make thought of this,
We must not think the Turk is so unskilful
To leave that latest which concerns him first,
Neglecting an attempt of ease and gain,
To wake and wage a danger profitless.
Duke. Nay, in all confidence, he's not for Rhodes.
1 *Officer.* Here is more news.

Enter a Messenger.

Mess. The Ottomites, reverend and gracious,
Steering with due course towards the isle of Rhodes,
Have there injointed them with an after fleet.
1 *Sen.* Ay, so I thought.—How many, as you guess?
Mess. Of thirty sail; and now they do re-stem
Their backward course, bearing with frank appearance
Their purposes toward Cyprus.—Signior Montano,
Your trusty and most valiant servitor,

---

contest carry it' (The Cowden-Clarkes). 'May carry it with less opposition (Mason). Win it more easily.

24. *Brace.* 'State of defence' (Johnson). 'Readiness' (Furness). 'State of armed preparation' (The Cowden-Clarkes).

25, 26. *The abilities ... dressed in.* The capabilities of defence which Rhodes possesses.

30. *Wake.* Provoke. *Wage* —'Hazard,' 'attempt' (Schmidt).

33. *Ottomites.* Ottomans.
Reverend and gracious (signiors.)

38. *With frank appearance.* 'Without concealment,' 'openly.'

39. *Toward Cyprus.* The island of Cyprus became subject to Venice in 1471 and remained under her undisturbed sovereignty till 1570, when it was attacked by a Turkish fleet under Mustapha, general of Selymus II., and eventually conquerred in 1571. The date of the action of *Othello* must be placed between 1569 when Selymus II. formed his designs against Cyprus and 1571 when he took possession of the island. The junction of the Turkish fleet with a squadron at Rhodes and its re-sailing to Cyprus, in May 1570, are historical events. The poet has however ignored the fact that Rhodes had been a Turkish possession since 1522; and he has prohibited all question as to how the movements

With his free duty recommends you thus,
And prays you to believe him.
Duke. 'Tis certain, then, for Cyprus.
Marcus Luccicos, is not he in town?
1 *Sen.* He's now in Florence. [patch.
Duke. Write from us to him; post-post-haste dis-
1 *Sen.* Here comes Brabantio and the valiant Moor.

Enter BRABANTIO, OTHELLO, IAGO, RODERIGO, *and* [Officers.

Duke. Valiant Othello, we must straight employ you
Against the general enemy Ottoman.—
[*To Brab.*] I did not see you; welcome, gentle signior;
We lack'd your counsel and your help to-night.
Bra. So did I yours. Good your grace, pardon me;
Neither my place nor aught I heard of business
Hath rais'd me from my bed, nor doth the general care
Take hold on me, for my particular grief

---

of the Turkish fleet near Rhodes could be watched from Cyprus, as also all doubt as to the arrival at Venice, during the same night and on the heels of one another in the course of a few hours, of galleys which left Cyprus, evidently at some interval of time, with messages reporting of the distinct and different stages of those movements. The storm (referred to in Act II) which destroyed the Turkish fleet is of course an invention of the poet's brain.

41. *Free duty*—freely (willingly) rendered duty.

42. *To believe him.* 'Not to doubt the truth of this intelligence' (Johnson).

44. *Luccicos.* 'Most probably a Greek soldier of Cyprus—an Estradiot—one who from his local knowledge was enabled to give him information' (Knight).

48. *We must straight employ you.* It was part of the policy of the Venetian state to employ strangers in their wars, thereby to exclude the danger of any ambitious enterprises on the part of the native. Reed quotes a passage from Thomas's *History of Italy*, p. 82: 'By lande they are served of straungers, both for generalls, for capitaines, and for all other men of warre; because theyr lawe permitteth not any Venetian to be capitaine over an armie by lande: Fearing, I thinke, Cæsar's example.'

55. *Particular.* Individual, private.

Is of so flood-gate and o'erbearing nature
That it engluts and swallows other sorrows
And it is still itself.

Duke. Why, what's the matter?

Bra. My daughter! Oh, my daughter!

Duke and Senators. Dead?

Bra. Ay, to me;
She is abus'd, stol'n from me, and corrupted
By spells and medicines bought of mountebanks;
For nature so preposterously to err,
Being not deficient, blind, or lame of sense,
Sans witchcraft could not.

Duke. Whoe'er he be that in this foul proceeding
Hath thus beguil'd your daughter of herself
And you of her, the bloody book of law
You shall yourself read in the bitter letter
After your own sense; yea, though our proper son

---

56. *Flood-gate.* Impetuous (like a flood rushing through an open sluice). *O'erbearing.* Sweeping everything before it.

58. *And it is still itself.* And it is still present in my heart, in its fullest force and fury.

60. *Abused.* Perverted by evil arts.

61. *Mountebanks.* Quack doctors, charlatans. *Mountebank*—lit., —'one who mounts a *bank* or bench to proclaim his nostrums.'

64. *Sans.* Without. The construction is: 'For nature, not being deficient, blind, or lame of sense, could not, sans witchcraft, (to) err so preposterously.

69. *After your own sense.* This is taken by almost every editor to mean 'after your own *interpretation*', which would suppose not merely a literal interpretation of the law but a plurality of literal interpretations of which Brabantio's will be allowed to prevail—a manifest absurdity. It is more gracious and proper that the Duke should, out of respect to the outraged feelings and grief of the old senator, allow him to decide the *quantum* of punishment according to his own sense, i. e., feeling of justice, *not the interpretation of the law*. The plain meaning of the passage is: 'You shall yourself *read*, i. e., pronounce, *the bloody book of law*, i. e., the stern sentence prescribed by law in this behalf, *in the bitter letter*, i. e., in its utmost literal severity, *after your own sense*, i. e., just as your feeling of justice and necessity may dictate to you.

Proper. Own.

Stood in your action.
Bra. Humbly I thank your grace.
Here is the man, this Moor, whom now, it seems,
Your special mandate for the state affairs
Hath hither brought.
Duke and Senators. We are very sorry for't.
Duke. [*To Othello*] What, in your own part, can you say to this?
Bra. Nothing, but this is so.
Oth. Most potent, grave, and reverend signiors,
My very noble and approv'd good masters,
That I have ta'en away this old man's daughter,
It is most true; true, I have married her.
The very head and front of my offending
Hath this extent, no more. Rude am I in my speech,
And little bless'd with the soft phrase of peace:
For since these arms of mine had seven years' pith,
Till now some nine moons wasted, they have us'd
Their dearest action in the tented field;
And little of this great world can I speak,
More than pertains to feats of broil and battle,
And therefore little shall I grace my cause
In speaking for myself. Yet, by your gracious patience,
I will a round unvarnish'd tale deliver
Of my whole course of love; what drugs, what charms,
What conjuration, and what mighty magic,—
For such proceeding I am charg'd withal,—

---

70. *Stood in your action.* 'Were the subject of your accusation.'

80. *The very head ... offending.* The highest and most prominent part of my offence; my utmost crime.

84. *Till now ... wasted.* 'Until about nine months ago.'

85. *Their dearest action.* Their best, most important and most agreeable exertion.

87. *Broil.* War.

90. *Round unvarnish'd tale.* Plain, simple, unadorned account.

93. *Withal.* With.

I won his daughter.
Bra. A maiden never bold;
Of spirit so still and quiet, that her motion
Blush'd at herself; and she, in spite of nature,
Of years, of country, credit, every thing,
To fall in love with what she fear'd to look on!
It is a judgment maim'd and most imperfect
That will confess perfection so could err
Against all rules of nature, and must be driven
To find out practices of cunning hell,
Why this should be. I therefore vouch again
That with some mixtures powerful o'er the blood,
Or with some dram conjur'd to this effect,
He wrought upon her.
Duke. To vouch this, is no proof,
Without more wider and more overt test.
Than these thin habits and poor likelihoods
Of modern seeming do prefer against him.
1 *Sen.* But, Othello, speak:

---

94. *I won his daughter.* I won his daughter *with.*

95. *Motion.* Here means 'movement or action in pursuance of own will, inclination or impulse.' The meaning is: 'A girl so modest by nature and of such a quiet, retiring disposition that she ever blushed to manifest her inclination in action'. Her *motion*, i. e., action, blushed at *herself* (itself). Cf. I. ii. 75.

96. *In spite of nature ... everything.* In spite of her quiet, retiring nature, the disparity in years, the difference of country, the danger to her credit, i. e., reputation, and everything else which would make it impossible for her to love the Moor.

100. *Perfection.* One so perfect, i. e., so full of excellences, as Desdemona.

101. *And must be driven.* And (a *whole* and *perfect* judgment) must be driven.

102. *Practices.* 'Stratagems', 'plots'.

105. *Dram.* Draught. *Conjur'd.* 'Charmed by incantations.'

107. *More wider.* 'More apparent or obvious' (Schmidt).

Overt test. 'Open proofs, external evidence' (Johnson).

108, 109. *Thin habits ... seeming.* 'Flimsy, outward appearances and slender probabilities of commonplace, insignificant import.'

Did you by indirect and forcèd courses 111
Subdue and poison this young maid's affections?
Or came it by request, and such fair question
As soul to soul affordeth?

Oth. I do beseech you,
Send for the lady to the Sagittary, 115
And let her speak of me before her father.
If you do find me foul in her report,
The trust, the office I do hold of you,
Not only take away, but let your sentence 119
Even fall upon my life.

Duke. Fetch Desdemona hither.

Oth. Ancient, conduct them; you best know the place.— [*Exeunt Iago and attendants.*
And, till she come, as truly as to heaven
I do confess the vices of my blood, 123
So justly to your grave ears I'll present
How I did thrive in this fair lady's love,
And she in mine.

Duke. Say it, Othello.

Oth. Her father lov'd me, oft invited me,
Still question'd me the story of my life
From year to year,—the battles, sieges, fortunes, 130
That I have pass'd.
I ran it through, even from my boyish days

---

111. *By indirect ... courses.* 'Employing unfair and violent means.'

112. *Affections*, in the plural, always means, in Shakespeare, 'natural feelings and passions.'

113. *Or came it by request.* 'It', i.e., 'your subjugation of her affections.' *Request* — wooing, solicitation.

Question—'conversation,' 'discourse.'

114. *As soul ... affordeth.* 'As gives one soul to another'; as produces the union of souls.'

123. *The vices of my blood.* 'The sins which my frail human nature commits.'

124. *Justly.* 'Truthfully.'

125. *Thrive.* 'Prosper,' 'succeed.'

130. *Fortunes.* 'Adventures,' 'accidents.'

To the very moment that he bade me tell it;
Wherein I spake of most disastrous chances,
Of moving accidents by flood and field,
Of hair-breadth scapes i' the imminent-deadly breach,
Of being taken by the insolent foe
And sold to slavery, of my redemption thence,
And portance in my travels' history;
Wherein of antres vast and deserts idle,
Rough quarries, rocks, and hills whose heads touch heaven,
It was my hint to speak,—such was the process,—
And of the Cannibals that each other eat,
The Anthropophagi, and men whose heads
Do grow beneath their shoulders. This to hear
Would Desdemona seriously incline:
But still the house-affairs would draw her hence;
Which ever as she could with haste dispatch,
She'ld come again, and with a greedy ear
Devour up my discourse: which I observing,
Took once a pliant hour, and found good means
To draw from her a prayer of earnest heart

---

135. *Moving.* 'Affecting,' 'thrilling.'

By flood and field. By sea and land.

136. *Imminent-deadly.* 'Threatening instant death.'

139. *My portance ... travels' history.* 'My behaviour in my travels as described in my history of them' (Steevens). *Travels'* is the quarto reading. The folio has *traveller's history*, an evident misprint.

140. *Antres.* 'Caverns and dens' (Johnson).

Idle—'barren,' 'unproductive.'

142. *It was my hint ... process.* I had occasion to speak, the course of the tale having required it.

144. *Anthropophagi.* 'Man-eaters.' The idea of 'men whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders' seems to have been derived by the poet from the fabulous account given by Sir Walter Raleigh in his *Discoverie of Guiana*, 1596, in which he mentions the Amazons, the Cannibals, and the "nation of people whose heads appear not above their shoulders."

147. *Still.* 'Constantly,' 'again and again.'

Hence. The quarto reading is 'thence' which many editors adopt.

That I would all my pilgrimage dilate, 153
Whereof by parcels she had something heard,
But not intentively. I did consent,
And often did beguile her of her tears,
When I did speak of some distressful stroke
That my youth suffer'd. My story being done,
She gave me for my pains a world of sighs: 159
She swore, in faith, 'twas strange; 'twas passing strange,
'Twas pitiful, 'twas wondrous pitiful;
She wish'd she had not heard it, yet she wish'd 162
That heaven had made her such a man; she thank'd me,
And bade me, if I had a friend that lov'd her,
I should but teach him how to tell my story,
And that would woo her. Upon this hint I spake;
She lov'd me for the dangers I had pass'd, 167
And I lov'd her that she did pity them.

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153. *Pilgrimage.* The story of my travels.

Dilate. . 'Relate at length.'

155. *Intentively*—the quarto reading—attentively. The folio reading is '*instinctively*', evidently a misprint.

159. *Sighs*—the quarto reading. The folio has 'kisses', an evident misprint, altogether inconsistent with the character of Desdemona (ll. 94-6) and with what follows' (Rolfe); though 'kissing in Elizabeth's time was not as significant as it is now.' (Furness).

160. *Swore.* Cf. Whitaker's *Vindication of Mary Queen of Scots* (quoted by Steevens): 'To aver upon faith and honour was then called swearing equally with a solemn appeal to God.'

Passing strange. 'Much more than strange' (Furness).

163. *Her.* For her. *Her* is the dative not the accusative. Desdemona wished *not* that *she had been born a man like Othello,* but that *heaven had made such a man as Othello for her, i.e., to be her husband.* This wish—which the modest girl couldn't conceal—would appear quite natural when her mental condition is understood and it prompted the Duke's remark, "This tale would win my daughter too," as also the words of the complaining father about his daughter being "half the wooer".

167, 8. *She loved ... pity them.* Q. If these two lines sum up the history of the loves of Othello and Desdemona, which resulted in their secret marriage, where was the scope for Cassio going between them "very oft", and for the "many a time" Desdemona spoke "dispraisingly" of the Moor and Cassio took his part [III. iii.]?

This only is the witchcraft I have us'd.—
Here comes the lady; let her witness it.

Enter DESDEMONA, IAGO, Attendants, and the rest.

Duke. I think this tale would win my daughter too.—
Good Brabantio,
Take up this mangled matter at the best;
Men do their broken weapons rather use
Than their bare hands.
Bra. I pray you, hear her speak;
If she confess that she was half the wooer,
Destruction on my head, if my bad blame
Light on the man!—Come hither, gentle mistress;
Do you perceive in all this noble company
Where most you owe obedience?
Des. My noble father,
I do perceive here a divided duty:
To you I am bound for life and education;
My life and education both do learn me
How to respect you; you are the lord of duty;
I am hitherto your daughter; but here's my husband,
And so much duty as my mother show'd
To you, preferring you before her father,
So much I challenge that I may profess

---

170. [*Stage direction.*] The words 'and the rest' are found only in the quartos. They appear to have been inadvertently omitted in the folio. Their significance will be seen in the Exposition.

178. *Come hither.* Desdemona was going towards Othello.

Gentle mistress — Ironical.

182. *Education.* Bringing up.

183. *Learn.* Teach.

188. *Challenge.* Claim. Q. 1. Who was with Desdemona, or was she alone, at 'the Sagittary' when Othello went away to the Duke's? Q. 2. Indicate any conversation which might have taken place between Iago and Desdemona prior to their appearance in the council-chamber. Q. 3. Depict the condition of Desdemona's mind which led to the strange tone assumed by her towards her beloved father,

Due to the Moor my lord.
Bra. God be wi' you!—I have done.—
Please it your grace, on to the state affairs:
I had rather to adopt a child than get it.—
Come hither, Moor;
I here do give thee that with all my my heart
Which, but thou hast already, with all my heart
I would keep from thee.—For your sake, jewel,
I am glad at soul I have no other child;
For thy escape would teach me tyranny,
To hang clogs on them.—I have done, my lord.
Duke. Let me speak like yourself, and lay a sentence,
Which, as a grise or step, may help these lovers
Into your favour.
When remedies are past, the griefs are ended
By seeing the worst, which late on hopes depended.
To mourn a mischief that is past and gone
Is the next way to draw new mischief on.

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190. *Please it your grace.* 'May it please your grace'; 'if it please your grace.'

191. *Get.* beget.

193. *With all my heart.* Most cheerfully. (Uttered with a painful irony).

194. *I would with all my heart keep from thee.* I would do all in my power to keep from thee.

195. *For your sake.* 'On your account', 'because of your conduct.' *Jewel,* ironical like 'gentle mistress' in l. 178, expresses disappointed affection. 'My precious child.'

197. *Escape.* 'Flight—includes the sense of *escapade* (sally or prank.') (The Cowden-Clarkes.)

198. *Hang clogs on them.* Curtail their freedom by cruel restrictions.

199. *Like yourself.* That is, in a strain of wise resignation, and acquiescence in a painful occurrence (mischief) which is past all remedy. *Lay a sentence.* Pronounce my judgment.

200. *Grise*—'Step,' 'degree.'

201. *Into your favour.* This line is not found in the folio.

202. *When remedies are past, etc.* When the stage for applying remedies is past, the griefs, which till then had been subject to the hope of being averted, are ended because the worst has happened. Cf. *Paradise Regained,* iii. 206: 'Where no hope is left, is left no fear.'

205. *Next*—nearest. *New* — fresh,

What cannot be preserv'd when fortune takes,
Patience her injury a mockery makes.
The robb'd that smiles steals something from the thief;
He robs himself that spends a bootless grief.
Bra. So let the Turk of Cyprus us beguile;
We lose it not, so long as we can smile.
He bears the sentence well that nothing bears
But the free comfort which from thence he hears,
But he bears both the sentence and the sorrow
That, to pay grief, must of poor patience borrow.
These sentences, to sugar, or to gall,

206–7. *What cannot be preserved ... a mockery makes.* Patience converts the unavoidable blow of misfortune into a mere touch. The patient endurance of an unavoidable grief removes its poignancy.

208. *Something*, i.e., the satisfaction of exulting over him.

212–3. *He bears the sentence well ... hears.* Johnson evidently takes '*sentence*' to mean 'judgment' and interprets '*free comfort*, etc.' as 'the moral precepts of consolation, which are liberally bestowed on occasion of the sentence.' So also the Cowden-Clarkes who interpret '*free comfort*, etc.' as 'the gratuitous sentiments of consolation which he hears delivered together with the sentence.' The context clearly shows, however, that '*sentence*' is used in the sense of 'maxim' or 'aphorism.' Brabantio feels quite put out by the maxims of consolation which the Duke coolly read to him, and after turning the Duke's words against himself by saying with bitter sarcasm—

"So let the Turk of Cyprus us beguile;
We lose it not, so long as we can smile"—

he assumes a serious tone and says: 'It is very easy, sir, for you to proffer advice and condolence in sententious aphorisms; but as the real sufferer, I find them an additional infliction.' The meaning of the passage is: 'He can patiently listen to (bear, endure) precepts and aphorisms of consolation, who is no further concerned therein than to appreciate the beautiful, liberal comfort they offer and proclaim; but he has to endure both the aphorisms and the grief, who, being the sufferer, is obliged to indent on patience, herself very poor, to satisfy the demands of his grief, *i. e.*, to endure it with patience, so very difficult to command.

216. *To sugar, or to gall.* As sugar or as gall; in the quality of sugar or gall. Cf. *Rich. II.* IV. i. 306: 'I have taken a king here to my flatterer.'

These sentences ... equivocal. 'Such maxims cut both ways and may prove either sweet or bitter according to circumstances' and they are very forcible in their effect either way.

Being strong on both sides, are equivocal:
But words are words; I never yet did hear
That the bruis'd heart was piercèd through the ear.—
I humbly beseech you proceed to the affairs of state.

Duke. The Turk with a most mighty preparation makes for Cyprus.—Othello, the fortitude of the place is best known to you; and though we have there a substitute of most allowed sufficiency, yet opinion, a sovereign mistress of effects, throws a more safer voice on you: you must therefore be content to slubber the gloss of your new fortunes with this more stubborn and boisterous expedition.

Oth. The tyrant custom, most grave senators,
Hath made the flinty and steel couch of war
My thrice-driven bed of down; I do agnize

218–9. *But words are words ... ear.* But, after all, words are but words and can give little consolation to the heart overcome by grief. I have never yet known that the grief-wounded heart was soothed by mere words of consolation.

Pierced. 'Penetrated' (in a metaphorical sense); 'reached'; 'touched'; 'soothed'; 'comforted.' Cf. *M. of V.* V. i. 67: 'With sweetest touches, pierce your mistress' ear.'

220. This is prose. The quarto reduces it to blank verse by reading—"Beseech you, now to the affairs of the state.' Delius, adopting the prose reading of the folio, observes: "This sudden change from verse to prose indicates a transition, correspondingly sudden, from theoretical moralizing and epigrammatic banter to the practical demands of the moment. For this reason in the folios the prose begins even in the last words of Brabantio's speech, whereas the quartos continue the rhythm: 'Beseech you now to the affairs of the state.'

222. *Fortitude.* Strength of fortifications. The word is now used only with reference to *moral* strength.

224. *Substitute.* Vicegerent. *Allowed*—acknowledged; well-known.

Opinion ... effects. Public opinion, 'the supreme guide to measures to be taken.'

225. *Slubber.* 'Soil,' 'obscure.' *Gloss*—fresh joy.

231. *Thrice-driven bed of down.* A bed made of very soft, light feathers thrice winnowed and selected; a most soft and comfortable bed. The down is *driven* with a fan to separate the light from the heavy. (Johnson).

Agnize—'acknowledge,' 'confess to,' 'avow.'

A natural and prompt alacrity 232
I find in hardness, and do undertake
These present wars against the Ottomites.
Most humbly therefore bending to your state, 235
I crave fit disposition for my wife,
Due reference of place and exhibition, 237
With such accommodation and besort
As levels with her breeding.
Duke. Why, at her father's.
Bra. I'll not have it so.
Oth. Nor I.
Des. Nor would I there reside, 241
To put my father in impatient thoughts
By being in his eye. Most gracious duke,

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232. *Alacrity*—cheerfulness.

233. *Hardness.* Hardship. 'I do confess I feel a natural and cheerful readiness for encountering hardships.'

235. *Bending to your state.* Bowing respectfully to you.

236. *Fit disposition.* Proper arrangements.

237. Due *reference* (assignment) of *place* (quarters) and *exhibition* (allowance), with such *accommodation* (conveniences) and *besort* (company, retinue) as are in keeping with *her breeding* (the style in which she was brought up). Johnson takes '*place*' to mean 'rank,' but there is no sense in Othello asking the Duke at this critical time to settle the 'rank' or 'precedence' of his wife. The Duke's suggestion that Desdemona should continue to live at her father's evidently meets all the requirements of Othello's request. Q. Did Othello, in marrying Desdemona on the eve of a war, intend to take her along with him, or did he intend to leave her at Venice? If the former, why does he feel puzzled when he is ordered by the Duke to start off that very night, and why does he, instead of soliciting permission for her accompanying him, propose to leave her at Veince and crave "fit disposition" for her? If the latter, what arrangements did he make for her suitable accommodation, and where would the married pair have slept that night and lived during the subsequent days if the emergency to start had arisen later?

240. The quarto reading is: 'If you please, be't at her father's.'

241. The quarto reading is: 'Nor I; I would not there reside.' The milder and more explanatory negation of the folio stands best by itself without the echo of Othello's 'Nor I,' which, however dramatic in effect, would sound harsh and improper from the lips of a loving, considerate daughter.

To my unfolding lend your prosperous ear;
And let me find a charter in your voice,
To assist my simpleness.
Duke. What would you, Desdemona?
Des. That I love the Moor to live with him,
My downright violence and storm of fortunes
May trumpet to the world: my heart's subdued
Even to the very quality of my lord;
I saw Othello's visage in his mind,
And to his honours and his valiant parts
Did I my soul and fortunes consecrate.

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244. *My unfolding.* The tale I unfold; my say.
Prosperous—used causatively—'propitious'; 'favouring.'

245. *Charter*—'power,' 'privilege.'

248. The quarto reading is 'That I *did* love.' Knight remarks: 'Desdemona's love remains, and though the *did* of the quartos assists the rhythm, it enfeebles the sense.'

249. *My downright violence ... fortunes.* In interpreting this and following lines, editors miss the real point and connexion with the course of thought. The meaning is: 'The downright violence (outrage to natural feelings) I have committed in the eye of the world by *falling in love with the Moor* and the storm (commotion and disturbance) I have created in my fortunes by *marrying him.*' The quarto reading is '*scorn* of fortunes,' but '*storm*' agrees better with '*violence*.'

251. *Quality.* This word has been variously interpreted. Malone takes it to mean 'profession,' in which sense it is frequently used by Shakespeare: e.g., *Ham.* II. ii. 333: 'Will they pursue the quality no longer than they can sing?' Other editors take it as signifying 'nature.' Furness seems to me the only editor who has grasped the correct meaning. '*Quality*' in this context undoubtedly refers to 'complexion' or 'colour.' The learned editor goes, however, beyond the mark in stating that Desdemona meant to say that 'she had *fallen in love* with the very colour of his (Othello's) face.' The connexion of thought, which will be found fully elaborated in the Exposition, is as follows:— Desdemona, finding herself in a most awkward predicament, concludes, on the sudden impulse of the moment, that the best course for her under the circumstances would be to accompany her lord to the wars, and with the view of securing permission therefor, she refers the Duke to the two extraordinary circumstances which openly manifest her intention to live with Othello—(1) the downright violence of her *love* (which outraged public sentiment), (2) the recklessness of her *marriage* (which created a storm in her fortunes); and proceeding to explain these, she says: My heart is

So that, dear lords, if I be left behind,
A moth of peace, and he go to the war,
The rites for why I love him are bereft me,
And I a heavy interim shall support
By his dear absence. Let me go with him.
  Oth. Let her have your voice.
Vouch with me, heaven, I therefore beg it not,
To please the palate of my appetite
Nor to comply with heat the young affects,
In my defunct and proper satisfaction,

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subdued (reconciled) even to the very *quality* (colour and appearance) of my lord. I looked at his face in his mental image and *loved* him (though my love was a downright violence to public sentiment); nay, I *married* him and consecrated (sacredly dedicated) my soul and fortunes to the service of his honourable deeds and valorous qualities (though that step involved a danger to my fortunes which indeed are now imperilled).' Consequently, she prays that she should not be separated from her lord but permitted to accompany him to the wars.

256. *A moth of peace.* An idle, useless creature enjoying the comforts of peace. *Moth*—'figuratively, an idle eater' (Schmidt).

257. *The rites for why I love him.* 'For *which* I love him' is the quarto reading. The word '*rites*' has perplexed almost every editor. 'Without question, Shakespeare wrote *rights*, i.e., the right of sharing his dangers with him' says Warburton. Keightley takes *rites* to mean 'rites of love,' 'amorous rites' and pointing out that whether we read *rites* or *rights* the idea would be indelicate from the lips of Desdemona, suggests '*parts*' for 'rites.' There is no doubt Shakespeare wrote '*rites*,' the word coming in most appropriately after '*consecrate*' in line 254. '*The rites for why I love him*' clearly means 'the *rites*, i. e., services and duties to do which I love him.' Desdemona consecrated herself to the service of her lord and prays that she should not be denied the privilege of performing the services which must follow such consecration.

For why—wherefore; on account of which. Cf. *Rich. II.*, V. i. 40.

258. *Dear absence*, i.e., 'deeply-felt.'

Q. Did Desdemona marry Othello knowing that the Cyprus trouble was impending and settling with her lord to accompany him to the wars?

260. *Voice.* Assent. The quarto reading is '*voices*,' but the singular is better as implying unanimity.

261. *Vouch with me.* Bear witness in my behalf.

Therefore—for the purpose I mention, namely.

263–4. *Nor to comply with heat ... satisfaction.* Page after page of commentary has been written on these two lines and various ingenious

But to be free and bounteous to her mind: 265

emendations, transpositions and interpretations have been suggested, which it is next to useless to reproduce here; suffice it to say that '*my*' and '*defunct*' (which appear both in the folio and the quarto) have been transmuted into '*me*' and '*defect,*' '*default,*' '*defenc't,*' '*distinct,*' '*disjunct*' and what not, and Othello has been made to confess before the Duke and the senators that his youthful passions were defunct in him, that their impetuosity was past and he could well control them. Each editor or critic has been content to close his note with an acknowledgment of the difficulty presented by the lines and a firm belief that some error had crept into them and emendation was absolutely necessary to make sense. The learned editor of the *New Variorum* closes a long note of four quarto pages with a most lame and impotent conclusion. "In the inexplicable passages of Shakespeare," he asks, "after the printers have borne all the obliquy which we can heap upon them, might we not frown a little at Shakespeare himself? He must have written rapidly. Would his fame be seriously impaired or stabbed to the centre, if we cautiously whispered among ourselves that he now and then wrote carelessly?" The identity of the folio and quarto readings, in this instance, is a clear indication that the defect is not in the text but in ourselves; and most assuredly the passage as it stands is capable of a simple, sensible interpretation. 'I ask it not' says Othello, 'to please the palate of my own appetite or to *comply with heat* (reciprocate with warmth, reciprocate the warmth of) *the young affects* (the youthful affections of Desdemona), *in my defunct and proper satisfaction* (by such gratification and indulgence thereof—which will not be improper—as I can seek or allow in my unemployed hours), but *to be free and bounteous to her mind* (to be liberal to her soul by granting her wish to accompany me).' Othello did not beg to take Desdemona with him in view of the pleasure of satisfying *his own sensual desires or hers* by such indulgence as he might, without objection, give them 'in his time of leisure and privacy, when he is not engaged in the duties of his office,' but simply to satisfy *her soul* in the desire the lady had expressed to accompany him. In this and other instances, the poet purposely represents Othello as being ever alive to his high rank and royal decent and consequently as speaking in a stilted style and 'with a bombast circumstance' before senators and noblemen. The style is kept up throughout the present speech. (ll. 260–74).

'*Comply*' is used transitively by old authors in the sense of *infold, embrace* (Cf. L. *complicare*): 'Seemed to *comply*, cloud-like, the daintie deitie' (Herrick). The word, as used in the context, is equivalent to 'please,' 'respond to,' 'reciprocate.'

'*Affects*' is used for 'affections,' 'inclinations,' 'desires.' Cf. *L.L.L.*, I. i. 152, 'For every man with his affects is born.'

'*Defunct*' is used in its etymological sense '*to have done with,*' like "defunctus laboribus" of Horace, and by its use here, Othello refers to the gratification of his moments of leisure and privacy, when he would be

And heaven defend your good souls, that you think
I will your serious and great business scant
When she is with me. No, when light-wing'd toys
Of feather'd Cupid seel with wanton dulness
My speculative and offic'd instrument,
That my disports corrupt and taint my business,

---

free from the duties of his office' (Bailey).

266. *Defend.* 'Forbid.' Cf. *M. A.*, II. i. 81: 'Heaven defend the lute should be like the case.'

That you think—that you should think.

267. *Scant*—neglect.

268. The quarto reading is '*For* she is with me.'

Light-wing'd toys—'frivolous amusements, enjoyments.' *Toys*—trifles.

269. *Feather'd Cupid,* because Cupid is always represented in Greek Mythology as a boy with wings armed with a bow and arrows.

Seel in falconry means 'to sew together the upper and lower eyelids of a hawk to accustom it afterwards to the hood.'

269–70. *Seel with wanton dulness my speculative and offic'd instrument.* This is another passage in which the emendations and speculations of commentators have 'seeled' their understanding. The quarto reading is '*foils* with wanton dulness my speculative and *active instruments.*' Editors have made a medley of the folio and quarto readings by adopting '*seel*' of the folio and '*active instruments*' or '*instruments*' of the quarto. On this, Knight remarks: "Having accomplished this hocus-pocus, they tell us that speculative instruments are the eyes, and active instruments the hands and feet; that to 'seel' is to close the eyelids of a bird, which applies very properly to the speculative instruments, but that *foils* better suits the active. It is their own work they are quarrelling with, and not that of the author. Either reading is good, if they had let it alone. The speculative and active instruments, which are *foiled,* are the thoughts and the senses; the speculative and *offic'd instrument,* which is *seeled,* is the *whole man* in meditation and in action. When the poet adopted the more expressive word *seel,* he did not leave the ugly anomaly which the commentators have made. He took the whole man as an instrument, spiritual and material, and metaphorically seeled the perceptions of that instrument.' The text of the folio undoubtely gives us the true reading which is capable of a simple, sensible interpretation. It is somewhat artificial to speak of the light-wing'd toys of Cupid impeding the action of the 'eyes' or the 'hands and feet' or of seeling 'the whole man in meditation and in action.' The '*speculative and offic'd instrument*' Othello refers to is '*his head when it is wearing a helmet.*' The meaning is: 'If trifling thoughts of love should enter my *speculative instrument* (i.e., head, being the

Let housewives make a skillet of my helm,
And all indign and base adversities
Make head against my estimation!
Duke. Be it as you shall privately determine,
Either for her stay or going: the affair cries haste,
And speed must answer it.
1 *Sen.* You must away to-night.
Oth. With all my heart.
Duke. At nine i' the morning here we'll meet again.—
Othello, leave some officer behind,
And he shall our commission bring to you,
With such things else of quality and respect
As doth import you.
Oth. So please your grace, my ancient;
A man he is of honesty and trust:
To his conveyance I assign my wife,
With what else needful your good grace shall think
To be sent after me.

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organ of thought) *when it is offic'd* (i.e., when it is wearing a helmet, when I am engaged in my official duties) and cover my brain with *wanton dulness* (i.e., dulness due to wandering thoughts), so that my *disports* (sports, pastimes) mar the conduct of my business, then let housewives make a skillet of my helm (because I do not deserve to wear it any longer), etc.' The reference to *helm* in l. 272 clearly indicates that the poet wrote the singular '*instrument*' and meant the passage as another instance of the Moor's 'bombast circumstance.'

272. *Skillet.* 'A small kettle or boiler.' Halliwell quotes a note which shows that the Museum of London Antiquities, formed by C. Roach Smith, F. S. A., contains 'a crested morion of the sixteenth century fitted with a hook and chain and formed into a camp-kettle,—found in dredging the Thames near the Tower of London.'

273. *Indign.* 'Unworthy,' 'disgraceful.' The contrast is with noble misfortunes which might ruin a man without ruining his reputation.

Make head against. 'Prevail over, ruin.'

274. *My estimation.* The estimation or reputation I am held in.

281. *Commission.* 'Formal warrant of appointment.'

282. *Things of quality and respect.* 'Marks of rank and honour.'

283. *Import.* Concern (be of importance). Cf. *L. L. L.* IV. i. 57: 'This letter is mistook, it importeth none here.'

Duke. Let it be so.—
Good night to every one.—And, noble signior,
If virtue no delighted beauty lack, 289
Your son-in-law is far more fair than black.

1 *Sen.* Adieu, brave Moor! use Desdemona well.

Bra. Look to her, Moor, if thou hast eyes to see; 292
She has deceiv'd her father, and may thee.

[*Exeunt Duke, Senators, Officers, etc.*

Oth. My life upon her faith!—Honest Iago, 294
My Desdemona must I leave to thee;
I prithee, let thy wife attend on her,
And bring them after in the best advantage.—
Come, Desdemona; I have but an hour
Of love, of worldly matters and direction,
To spend with thee: we must obey the time. 300

[*Exeunt Othello and Desdemona.*

Rod. Iago—

Iago. What say'st thou, noble heart?

Rod. What will I do, thinkest thou? 303

Iago. Why, go to bed, and sleep.

289–90. *If virtue ... black.* 'If virtue comprehends everything in itself, then your virtuous son-in-law is, of course, beautiful; he has that beauty which delights every one. *Delighted* for *delighting.* Shakespeare often uses the active and passive participles indiscriminately.' (Steevens). *Fair*—a pun, combining the meanings 'fair in complexion' and 'beautiful.'

292–3. Depict the thoughts of Brabantio throughout this scene and explain the apparently unkind utterance contained in these lines.

294. *My life upon her faith!*—addressed to nobody in particular and uttered in an under-tone almost as an aside to himself. The thought in Othello's mind is as follows: 'Indeed, a strange remark for a father to make! well—but let me not heed this outburst of the old man's passion. I will stake my very life upon her being faithful to me.'

295. *To thee*—to thy care.

296. Q. When and how did Othello's acquaintance with Emilia begin?

297. *In the best advantage.* In the best and quickest way you can and with the best arrangements for comfort and convenience.

303. *What will I do?* What do you think I have resolved to do?

Rod. I will incontinently drown myself.

Iago. If thou dost, I shall never love thee after. Why, thou silly gentleman!

Rod. It is silliness to live when to live is torment; and then have we a prescription to die when death is our physician.

Iago. Oh, villainous! I have looked upon the world for four times seven years; and since I could distinguish betwixt a benefit and an injury, I never found man that knew how to love himself. Ere I would say, I would drown myself for the love of a guinea-hen, I would change my humanity with a baboon.

Rod. What should I do? I confess it is my shame to be so fond; but it is not in my virtue to amend it.

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305. *Incontinently.* 'Immediately.' Cf. IV. iii. 11, 'He says he will return incontinent.'

309. *Prescription.* Direction. (Used in the technical medical sense). 'When Death is the only doctor that can cure us, the recipe is suicide.'

311. *Villainous!*—Shameful to talk in that silly manner!

312. *Four times seven years.* The Cowden-Clarkes observe: "It is remarkable that Shakespeare has here taken pains to specify the exact age of Iago, as he has specified that of Hamlet. ... They are perhaps the two most intellectual characters that our poet has drawn; and he has made them nearly of the same age, as if at that period of life a man's intellect were at its culminating point of activity and energy. ... That Iago should be no more than twenty-eight years old and yet so versed in wordly ways, so dicided in his opinions, so competent in stratagem, so expert in turning the worthiest as well as the weakest points of human nature to his purpose, so utterly without faith in goodness as he is, makes him the more an innate villain. His cynical contempt is not the growth of sad experience or soured feeling, his coarseness and hardness are not the result of a long course of battling with the world, the savage pertinacity of revenge is not the off-spring of an old-conceived resentment; but he is a hard, cold-blooded, almost vivacious scoundrel, from inherent disposition, who uses his keen intellect with the same fierce joy in its skill and power to destroy that he uses his sharp dagger or sword."

315. *Guinea-hen.* Formerly, a cant term for 'a woman of loose character', 'a mercenary woman.'

318 *Virtue.* Power. Iago pretends to understand the word in the ordinary sense.

Fond—foolish.

Iago. Virtue! a fig! 'tis in ourselves that we are thus or thus. Our bodies are our gardens, to the which our wills are gardeners; so that if we will plant nettles, or sow lettuce, set hyssop and weed up thyme, supply it with one gender of herbs or distract it with many, either to have it sterile with idleness or manured with industry, why, the power and corrigible authority of this lies in our wills. If the beam of our lives had not one scale of reason to poise another of sensuality, the blood and baseness of our natures would conduct us to most preposterous conclusions; but we have reason to cool our raging motions, our carnal stings, our unbitted lusts, whereof I take this that you call love to be a sect or scion. 332

Rod. It cannot be.

Iago. It is merely a lust of the blood and a permision of the will. Come, be a man. Drown thyself! drown cats and blind puppies. I have professed me thy friend, and I confess me knit to thy deserving with cables of perdurable toughness; I could never better stead thee than now. Put money in thy purse; follow these wars;

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323. *Gender.* Kind. *Either to have it*—if we wish to have it.

324. *With idleness*, i.e., as the result of idleness. *Manured*—cultivated.

325. *Corrigible.* Used in the active sense. '*Corrective.*'

326. *Beam.* The folio reading is '*braine*' which, as Theobald has pointed out, is a misprint for '*beame.*' The quarto reading is '*balance*' which many modern editors adopt.

329. *Conclusions*—acts.

330. *Motions*—'sensual impulses.' *Unbitted*—unbridled, unrestrained.

331. *Sect.* 'Cutting,' means the same as 'scion.'

334. *Merely.* In the sense of 'altogether,' 'entirely.'

A lust ... will. 'A desire of the blood, uncontrolled by the will.'

337. *Thy deserving.* That which thou wishest to *deserve* (earn, secure), viz., Desdemona. ['That which is due to thee, viz., Desdemona's love' (Schmidt). Thy 'deserts, merits, ... worthiness' (Furness).]

338. *Perdurable*—thoroughly durable. *Stead*—be of service to.

339. *Follow these wars.* It is clear from Act II that Roderigo disguised himself 'with an usurped beard' and got enlisted as a soldier

defeat thy favour with an usurped beard; I say, put money in thy purse. It cannot be that Desdemona should long continue her love to the Moor,—put money in thy purse,—nor he his to her: it was a violent commencement, and thou shalt see an answerable sequestration;—put but money in thy purse. These Moors are changeable in their wills;—fill thy purse with money:—the food that to him now is as luscious as locusts, shall be to him shortly as bitter as coloquintida. She must change for youth: when she is sated with his body, she will find the error of her choice; she must have change, she must: therefore put money in thy purse. If thou wilt needs damn thyself, do it a more delicate way than drowning. Make all the money thou canst: if sanctimony and a frail vow betwixt an erring barbarian and a supersubtle Venetian be not too hard for my wits and all the tribe of hell, thou shalt enjoy

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and followed the ancient. Iago afterwards appoints him to be one of the watch (II. i.) In II. iii., he says to Roderigo, "Go where thou art billeted."

340. *Defeat thy favour ... beard.* Disguise thy countenance with a false beard. *Usurped*—assumed, false.

344. *An answerable sequestration.* 'A correspondingly violent rupture or separation.'

348. *Locusts.* The sweet fruit of the carob (locust) tree. Locusts and wild honey are mentioned in the New Testament as the food of St. John the Baptist.—*St. Matth.* III. 4.

Coloquintida. Colocynth or bitter apple.

352-3. *A more delicate way.* 'That is, by adultery with Desdemona' (Delius).

354. *Sanctimony.* Affected purity and holiness (of Desdemona).

Frail vow—easily-broken vow taken during the marriage ceremony.

Erring barbarian. 'Wandering, vagabond foreigner.' Cf. I. i. 149: 'An extravagant and wheeling stranger.' Also, *Ham.* I. i. 154: 'The extravagant and 'erring spirit.' Ritson says: "Here is a collection of quibbles. By an 'erring Barbarian' is meant not only a *roving Moor,* but a *shallow, blundering brute;* and this character is set in opposition to that of a *supersubtle Venetian woman.*'

355. *Supersubtle.* Possessing the most refined cunning.

356. *All the tribe of hell.* The help of all the devils in hell.

her; therefore make money. A pox of drowning thyself! it is clean out of the way; seek thou rather to be hanged in compassing thy joy than to be drowned and go without her.

Rod. Wilt thou be fast to my hopes, if I depend on the issue?

Iago. Thou art sure of me.—Go, make money.—I have told thee often, and I re-tell thee again and again, I hate the Moor: my cause is hearted; thine hath no less reason. Let us be conjunctive in our revenge against him; if thou canst cuckold him, thou dost thyself a pleasure, me a sport. There are many events in the womb of time which will be delivered. Traverse! go, provide thy money. We will have more of this to-morrow. Adieu.

Rod. Where shall we meet i' the morning?

Iago. At my lodging.

Rod. I 'll be with thee betimes.

Iago. Go to; farewell. Do you hear, Roderigo?

Rod. What say you?

Iago. No more of drowning, do you hear?

Rod. I am changed; I 'll go sell all my land. [*Exit.*

Iago. Thus do I ever make my fool my purse;
For I mine own gain'd knowledge should profane,
If I would time expend with such a snipe,
But for my sport and profit. I hate the Moor;

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365. *Hearted.* 'Firmly fixed in the heart.

366. *Conjunctive.* 'Conjointed,' 'united.'

369. *Traverse.* An ancient military term. 'March,' 'go on.'

376-8. *What say you ... changed.* This portion is not found in the folio, but only in the quarto.

380. *Profane.* 'Desecrate,' 'turn to unworthy use.'

381. *Snipe.* Simpleton. Steevens remarks: "*Woodcock* is the term generally used by Shakespeare to denote an insignificant fellow; but Iago is more sarcastic, and compares his dupe to a smaller and meaner bird" of the same species. See *Ham.* I. iii. 115.

And it is thought abroad, that 'twixt my sheets
He has done my office: I know not if 't be true;
But I, for mere suspicion in that kind,
Will do as if for surety. He holds me well;
The better shall my purpose work on him.
Cassio's a proper man: let me see now;
To get his place and to plume up my will
In double knavery—How, how?—Let 's see:—
After some time, to abuse Othello's ear
That he is too familiar with his wife.
He hath a person and a smooth dispose
To be suspected, fram'd to make women false.
The Moor is of a free and open nature,
That thinks men honest that but seem to be so,
And will as tenderly be led by the nose
As asses are.
I have 't. It is engender'd. Hell and night
Must bring this monstrous birth to the world's light.
[*Exit.*

383. *And it is thought abroad*, etc. Q. What were the circumstances which gave occasion to its " being thought abroad " that Othello had a suspicious intimacy with the wife of his ancient, and how did the scandal reach the ears of the *husband?*

386. *He holds me well.* 'He entertains a good opinion of me.'

388. *Proper.* 'Comely,' 'handsome.' Cf. IV. iii. 35.

389–90. *To plume up ... knavery.* 'As if any project that involved reduplication of knavery were a feather in the cap of his depraved will—a thing to plume himself upon as a feat of intellectual volition' (The Cowden-Clarkes). This note can hardly be correct. The real meaning is—'To work up my will into the accomplishment of a double knavery' i. e., against both Cassio and Othello. The metaphor is taken from a bird trimming up its feathers with the bill in preparation for a flight. The quarto reading—'To *make up* my will, etc.'—quite confirms this interpretation.

391. *Abuse.* 'Deceive,' 'delude.' Cf. I. i. 171.

393. *Smooth dispose.* 'nice disposition,' 'winning manner.'

399. *Engendered.* Begotten, conceived.

Hell and night. 'Devilish cunning and dark plotting.'

ACT II.

Scene I. *A Seaport in Cyprus. An open place near the quay.*

Enter Montano *and two* Gentlemen.

Mon. What from the cape can you discern at sea?
1 *Gent.* Nothing at all: it is a high-wrought flood;
I cannot, 'twixt the heaven and the main,
Descry a sail.
Mon. Methinks the wind hath spoke aloud at land;
A fuller blast ne'er shook our battlements:
If it hath ruffian'd so upon the sea,
What ribs of oak, when mountains melt on them,
Can hold the mortise? What shall we hear of this?
2 *Gent.* A segregation of the Turkish fleet:
For do but stand upon the foaming shore,

Scene I.—The locality of the scenes after the First Act must be at *Famagusta* which was the principal sea-port of Cyprus at the time. "It was strongly fortified,—a fact which Shakespeare must have known, when, in III. ii., Othello says: 'I will be walking on the *works*.'" (Knight). "Neere unto the haven (says Knolles in his *History of the Turks*), standeth an old *castle*, with four towers after the ancient manner of building. To this castle we find Othello presently repairs." (Malone).

3. *The heaven and the main.* The sky and the sea. Cf. l. 39, 'The main and the aerial blue.' The 1st quarto has '*haven*' which Malone adopts, citing in defence of it a passage from Knolles's *History of the Turks*, 1570, that there was a '*haven* of Famugusta, which was defended from the main by two great rocks' forty paces apart.

7. *Ruffian'd.* 'Played the ruffian,' 'been boisterous.'

8. *Mountains.* Waves rising as high as mountains. See l. 187. 'hills of seas.'

9. *Hold the mortise.* Remain firm in the joints. 'Mortise' is the groove made in one piece of wood into which the tenon or projection of another piece fits, forming a joint.

10. *Segregation.* 'Separation,' 'dispersion.' The opposite of 'congregation.'

11. *The foaming shore.* The beach on which the waves break in foam.

The chidden billow seems to pelt the clouds;
The wind-shak'd surge, with high and monstrous mane,
Seems to cast water on the burning Bear, 14
And quench the guards of the ever-fixed pole.
I never did like molestation view
On the enchafèd flood.
Mon. If that the Turkish fleet
Be not enshelter'd and embay'd, they are drown'd;
It is impossible they bear it out. 19

Enter a third Gentleman.

3 *Gent.* News, lads! our wars are done. 20
The desperate tempest hath so bang'd the Turks,
That their designment halts; a noble ship of Venice
Hath seen a grievous wreck and sufferance 23
On most part of their fleet.
Mon. How! is this true?
3 *Gent.* The ship is here put in:
A Veronessa, Michael Cassio, 26
Lieutenant to the warlike Moor Othello,

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12. *The chidden billow ... clouds.* 'The waves scolded (as it were) by the winds, and made to roar, lift themselves up to the sky.'

13. *Mane.* The folio prints 'maine' and the quartos 'mayne.' Knight corrected the spelling into '*mane*,' pointing out that the image of a war-horse tossing its *mane* was undoubtedly in the mind of the poet.

14. *The burning Bear.* The bright constellation called 'the Great Bear,' near to the polar star.

15. *The guards of the ... pole.* The two stars (Merak and Dubhe, commonly called the Pointers) in the Great Bear, the line between which points nearly in the direction of the north star or pole star.

16. *Molestation.* 'Disturbance,' 'tumult,' 'uproar.'

17. *Enchafèd.* Enraged.

19. *Bear it out.* Live through this storm.

22. *Designment.* 'Design,' 'enterprise.'

23. *Sufferance.* 'Disaster.'

26. *A Veronessa.* This word which is spelt 'Verenessa' in the folio and 'Veronessa' in the quartos has been the stumbling block of editors in construing the passage. Theobald altered the punctuation to "in, A Veronessa; Michael Cassio, etc." and is followed by the editors who

Is come on shore. The Moor himself at sea,
And is in full commission here for Cyprus.
Mon. I am glad on 't; 'tis a worthy governor.
3 *Gent.* But this same Cassio, though he speak of comfort
Touching the Turkish loss, yet he looks sadly,
And prays the Moor be safe; for they were parted
With foul and violent tempest.
Mon. Pray heavens he be;
For I have serv'd him, and the man commands
Like a full soldier. Let 's to the seaside, ho!
As well to see the vessel that 's come in
As to throw out our eyes for brave Othello,

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take the ship to be 'one fitted out by the people of Verona, a city in the Venetian state.' Steevens corrected 'A Veronessa' into '*The* Veronessa,' making it the name of the ship, while Daniel, who is nothing if not ingenious, suggests '*La* Veronessa.' Other editors change 'Veronessa' into '*Veronese*' and take it as appositional to 'Michael Cassio,' surmising that Shakespeare forgot for the moment that he had made Cassio a Florentine, or that he chose to let the speaker call him a Veronese. Furness, following Elze, thinks 'Veronessa' a misprint for '*Verrinessa*,' which, claiming kinship with the Italian '*verrinare*' (cut through) might be taken to signify nothing more than that the ship was 'a cutter.' It is certainly strange that the Third Gentleman who has brought news of the wreck of the Turkish fleet and has just spoken of 'a noble ship of Venice' should, immediately afterwards, take it into his head to add information about a most unimportant particular, viz., that she is a Veronessa, or volunteer a wrong guess as to the city of Italy Cassio came from and tell us that he is a Veronese! How, one might take the liberty of asking, did he, in the excitement of the moment, come to know or care to learn the nationality of the ship or the man? It is surely uncharitable to charge the poet not merely with initial negligence or forgetfulness, but a perpetuation of it in the folio which discloses so many alterations made by his pen. The truth of the matter is that 'A Veronessa' refers neither to the ship nor, by correction into 'A Veronese,' to Cassio, but to *Bianca* who, as we shall see in the Exposition, accompanied Cassio from Venice. 'A Veronessa' simply means '*a Verona lady*' (as one could probably judge from the appearance and features), '*a beauty of Verona* (the land of Juliet).' The city of Verona was evidently celebrated for its beauties.

28. *Is come.* Singular for plural. Cf. I. i. 171: 'Is there not charms?'

36. *Full.* 'Fully accomplished and competent,' 'thorough,' 'perfect,'

Even till we make the main and the aerial blue
An indistinct regard.
3 *Gent.* Come, let 's do so:
For every minute is expectancy
Of more arrivance.

Enter CASSIO.

Cas. Thanks, you the valiant of this warlike isle,
That so approve the Moor! Oh, let the heavens
Give him defence against the elements,
For I have lost him on a dangerous sea.
Mon. Is he well shipp'd?
Cas. His bark is stoutly timber'd, and his pilot
Of very expert and approv'd allowance;
Therefore my hopes, not surfeited to death,
Stand in bold cure. [*A cry within,* 'A sail, a sail, a sail!'

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40. *Regard.* View.

45. *The elements.* The sea and the wind. 'The air and the water regarded as uniting to produce a storm.'

49. *Expert and approv'd allowance.* 'Allowed and approved (proved) expertness' (Steevens).

50. *My hopes, not surfeited to death, stand in bold cure.* Johnson confessed his inability to understand this passage, and Furness, after quoting the random paraphrases of the various commentators, which he says are quite intelligible and satisfactory "could we only forget the text," says ditto to the learned Doctor. The meaning is however quite plain when the context is carefully noted. Cassio and Othello had been parted by a "foul and violent tempest." Cassio came out safe and was hoping to meet the Moor but in vain; whereupon he abandoned all his *hopes* and, becoming sad, began to "*pray* (that) the Moor (might) be safe." "Oh, let the heavens Give him defence against the elements, For I have lost him on a dangerous sea." "Is he well shipp'd?" asks Montano, and this question reminds Cassio that his general's ship is "stoutly timber'd" and that his pilot is no ordinary man, and the good lieutenant at once feels his hopes revived and jumps from the despondency of prayer into the boldness of hope. On the strength of these facts which are now called to my mind, says he, I make bold to cure and revive the hopes (which I abandoned as dead and lifeless); for I see these hopes could have been only *paralysed*—they had not been overfed on fancies and wishes, thereby to have been swollen and surfeited to death.

Enter a fourth Gentleman.

Cas. What noise?

4 *Gent.* The town is empty; on the brow o' the sea
Stand ranks of people, and they cry 'A sail!'

Cas. My hopes do shape him for the governor.
[*Guns heard.*

2 *Gent.* They do discharge their shot of courtesy;
Our friends at least.

Cas. I pray you, sir, go forth,
And give us truth who 'tis that is arriv'd

2 *Gent.* I shall. [*Exit.*

Mon. But, good lieutenant, is your general wiv'd?

Cas. Most fortunately: he hath achiev'd a maid
That paragons description and wild fame;
One that excels the quirks of blazoning pens,
And in the essential vesture of creation
Does tire the ingener.

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52. *What noise?* What is that noise? The reference is to the great bustle heard at a distance, *not* to the cry—'A sail, a sail, a sail.'

57. *Our friends at least.* The firing of the salutes indicates at any rate it is a friendly vessel that has arrived, whether or not it be Othello's.

60. *Wiv'd.* Married. Cf. *M. of V.*, I. ii. 145: 'I had rather he should shrive me than wive me.' Q. Why, of all things, does Montano ask this question at this moment?

61. *Most fortunately.* A most happy marriage.

62. *Paragons ... wild fame.* Surpasses all description and the wildest stories and legends of beautiful women.

63. *One that excels ... pens.* One whose excellences surpass the *quirks* (conceits, extravagant fancies) of eulogy. *Blazoning*—'[illegible].'

64. *The essential vesture of creation.* Johnson interprets this as 'the *real* qualities with which creation has *invested* her.' The reference is clearly to Desdemona's *natural beauty of form.*

65. *Does tire the ingener.* The quarto reading is 'Does bear all excellency.' The folio has 'Do's tyre the Ingeniuer' and there is little doubt *ingener* is the correct orthography of the word, though numerous emendations and readings have been suggested: e. g., '*inventor,*' '*imaginer, ingene ever,*' '*engineer,*' '*ingenious verse,*' '*ingenious virtue,*' etc. *Ingener* means 'painter' or 'artist' and the phrase 'Does tire the ingener' simply means 'wearies out the painter.' Malone quotes an extract from Fleckno's *Discourse of the English Stage,* 1664: 'We in

Re-enter second Gentleman.

How now! who has put in?
2 *Gent.* 'T is one Iago, ancient to the general.
Cas. He 's had most favourable and happy speed.
Tempests themselves, high seas, and howling winds,
The gutter'd rocks, and congregated sands,—
Traitors ensteep'd to enclog the guiltless keel,
As having sense of beauty, do omit
Their mortal natures, letting go safely by
The divine Desdemona.
Mon. What is she?
Cas. She that I spake of, our great captain's captain,
Left in the conduct of the bold Iago,
Whose footing here anticipates our thoughts.
A se'nnight's speed! Great Jove, Othello guard,

England ... having proceeded no further than to bare painting, and not arrived to the stupendous wonders of your *ingeniers.*'

69. *Gutter'd rocks.* Rocks (lurking under water) indented and worn away by the action of the waves.

70. *Traitors ... keel.* Traitors lying concealed under water to arrest the passage of the vessel.

72. *Mortal.* 'Deadly,' 'destructive.'

74. *Captain's captain.* Cf. *Rich III.* IV. iv. 336: 'And she shall be sole victress, Cæsar's Cæsar."

76, 77. *Whose footing here ... A se'nnight's speed!* The folio has a comma after 'thoughts' and a full stop after 'speed.' Editors as a rule omit the comma and take the passage as signifying that Desdemona arrived a week sooner than was expected, interpreting 'speed' as equivalent to 'time.' They do this being altogether in the dark as to the length of time which, according to Shakespeare, a ship ordinarily occupied in passing from Venice to Cyprus, and that which Iago's ship did on the present occasion. We shall see from Acts III, IV and V that the time usually required for the voyage between Venice and Cyprus was a *fortnight* and consequently it makes no difference whether we take Cassio as saying that Iago's ship has arrived *after a voyage of seven days* or *seven days sooner than was expected.* But the question may be asked, why did Cassio expect Iago's ship to arrive *seven days later,* knowing as he did that she was to start *within a few hours* of his own [I. iii. 279] and met with the same dangerous storm which, in its effect, favoured and accelerated speed. The idea about 'anticipation' therefore closes most naturally with 'thoughts,' and 'A se'nnight's speed' is exclamatory,

And swell his sail with thine own powerful breath,
That he may bless this bay with his tall ship,
Make love's quick pants in Desdemona's arms,
Give renew'd fire to our extincted spirits,
And bring all Cyprus comfort!

Enter DESDEMONA, EMILIA, IAGO, RODERIGO, *and* [Attendants.

Oh, behold,
The riches of the ship is come on shore!
Ye men of Cyprus, let her have your knees.—
Hail to thee, lady! and the grace of heaven,
Before, behind thee, and on every hand,
Enwheel the round!

Des. I thank you, valiant Cassio.
What tidings can you tell me of my lord?

The folio contains many instances (it is scarcely necessary to cite any) where a comma instead of a full stop ends the thought, and a full stop is often found where we should properly use the mark of exclamation. Cassio, having remarked that Desdemona's landing had taken place before ever they thought of it, bursts out into an exclamation regarding the marvellous speed with which the ship has covered the whole voyage—*a sevennight's speed!*—and prays that Othello's ship might be blessed with the same favourable and happy expedition.

Anticipate—come before. Cf. *Tr. & Cr.* IV. v. 2: 'Here art thou in appointment fresh and fair, anticipating time.'

Se'nnight. A contraction of 'seven night' as '*fortnight*' is of 'fourteen night.'

77. *Jove.* 'For this absurdity I have not the smallest doubt that the Master of the Revels, and not our poet, is answerable (Malone). The Cowden-Clarkes remark: "Far from thinking that there is either 'absurdity' in the word, or that it was a substitution for any other, we believe it to have been the author's own word, characteristically put into Cassio's mouth here. To this day Italians use mythological adjurations in common with Christian appeals, and in Shakespeare's time the custom was almost universal."

78. *Swell ... breath.* 'Fill the sails of his ship with favourable winds.' Wind is here spoken of as the breath of Jupiter.

79. *Bless.* Make happy (by his arrival).

82. *And ... comfort.* This is found only in the quartos.

87. *Enwheel,* Encircle, encompass; surround and guard.

Cas. He is not yet arriv'd; nor know I aught
But that he 's well and will be shortly here?
Des. Oh, but I fear— How lost you company?
Cas. The great contention of the sea and skies
Parted our fellowship—
[*Within* 'A sail, a sail!' *Guns heard.*
But, hark! a sail.
2 *Gent.* They give their greeting to the citadel;
This likewise is a friend.
Cas. See for the news.—[*Exit Gentleman.*
Good ancient, you are welcome.—[*To Emil.*] Welcome, mistress.—
Let it not gall your patience, good Iago,
That I extend my manners; 'tis my breeding
That gives me this bold show of courtesy. [*Kissing her.*
Iago. Sir, would she give you so much of her lips
As of her tongue she oft bestows on me,
You 'd have enough.
Des. Alas, she has no speech.
Iago. In faith, too much;
I find it still when I have leave to sleep:
Marry, before your ladyship, I grant,

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92. *The great contention ... skies*, i. e., the tempest.

94. *Their greeting.* This is the reading of the quartos. The folio reading is '*this* greeting' which White has pointed out to be a misprint, due to the occurrence of 'this' in the next line.

97. *Gall your patience.* Chafe and put an end to your patience; make you angry.

98. *Extend my manners.* Give a somewhat free expression to my welcome. Kissing, as a form of salutation, was common in Shakespeare's day, as for instance at the end of a dance. See *Hen. VIII.* I. iv. 95, where the King says to his partner in the dance: 'I were unmannerly to take you out and not to kiss you.'

102. *You'd have enough*, i. e., you would soon find it a nuisance.

104. *I find it still ... leave to sleep.* The 1st quarto has '*list*' (inclination) in place of 'leave' which editors generally discard on the ground that it makes nonsense of Iago's speech. The nonsense is however due to the failure to note the right antecedent of '*it*' and the right

She puts her tongue a little in her heart,
And chides with thinking.

Emil. You have little cause to say so.

Iago. Come on, come on; you are pictures out of doors, bells in your parlours, wild-cats in your kitchens, saints in your injuries, devils being offended, players in your housewifery, and housewives in your beds.

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meaning of '*still.*' Iago says that he finds *it* (Emilia's tongue) *still* (quiet) only when he has permission to sleep. He pretends that his wife is a tremendous termagant and scolds him continually, and so rules him that he could go to bed *only with her permission* and that is the only time when her talkative tongue is quiet and he is free from her abuse. The antecedent of '*it*' is not 'speech' in l.102, but '*tongue*' in l.101. After replying to Desdemona's remark about Emilia's *speech*, in l.104 Iago returns to his own word '*tongue*' and actually reiterates it in l. 106.

106, 107. *She puts her tongue ... thinking.* She locks up her angry feelings in her heart and does not give expression to them in words, but contents herself with abusing me mentally.

109–112. These lines which are printed as prose in the folio appear as four lines of verse in the quartos, ending *doors, ... kitchens, ... offended, ... beds.* The prose reading is certainly better and the fact that it scans simply proves that Shakespeare dropt poetry from his mouth even when he spoke prose.

109. *Pictures out of doors.* Outside home, mute and pleasant-looking like pictures.

110. *Bells in your parlours.* Sweet-voiced like bells, when receiving visitors and friends.

Wild-cats in your kitchens, i.e., you yell as fiercely as wild cats to your domestics and servants. Iago insinuates that he is no better than a menial servant to Emilia.

111. *Saints in your injuries.* 'Sanctimonious when doing injuries.' 'When you have a mind to do injuries, you put on an air of sanctity' (Johnson).

Devils being offended. As revengeful and dangerous as devils when one dares to offend you.

111-112. *Players ... beds.* Lazy when you ought to be at work and busy when you go to bed. The business insinuated is the giving of 'curtain lectures.' White says: 'In Shakespeare's day, and in some parts of England still, *house-wife* is pronounced *husif*, which has passed into *hussy*, with a half jocular, half serious, implication of wantonness, which seems not to have been lacking three hundred years ago. Indeed, perhaps, we should read here *hussies in your beds.*' The word is often

Des. Oh, fie upon thee, slanderer!
Iago. Nay, it is true, or else I am a Turk; 114
You rise to play, and go to bed to work.
Emil. You shall not write my praise.
Iago. No, let me not.
Des. What wouldst thou write of me, if thou shouldst praise me?
Iago. Oh, gentle lady, do not put me to 't;
For I am nothing, if not critical. 119
Des. Come on, assay.—There 's one gone to the harbour?
Iago. Ay, madam.
Des. I am not merry; but I do beguile 122
The thing I am by seeming otherwise.—
Come, how wouldst thou praise me? 124

Iago. I am about it; but indeed my invention comes from my pate as birdlime does from frize; it plucks out

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used by Shakespeare contemptuously for 'hussy.' See IV. i. 'Now will I question Cassio of Bianca, A housewife that by selling her desires Buys bread and clothes.'

Steevens says: "Almost the same thoughts are to be found in Puttenham's *Arte of Poesie*, 1589: 'We limit the comely parts of a woman to consist in foure points, that is to be a shrewe in the kitchen, a saint in the Church, an Angell at the bourd, and an Ape in the bed, [p. 299 ed. Arber]."

114. *Or else I am a Turk.* Otherwise, you may call me an infidel. *Turk* was everything that was wicked and despicable to the Elizabethans. See *M.* of *V.* IV. i. 32.

115. *You rise ... work*—don't you? This line is addressed to Emilia.

119. *Critical.* 'Censorious' 'fault-finding.' Cf. *M. N. D.* V. i. 54: 'Some satire, keen and critical.'

120. *Assay.* Try, attempt.

122. *I do beguile the thing I am.* 'I cheat my sorrow.'

125–8. The quartos print this as four lines of verse, ending *invention ... frize; ... labours, ... delivered.* Of course it ought to be treated as prose, as Iago's muse was still 'in labour.'

125. *Invention.* 'Poetic powers.' Shakespeare calls his *Venus and Adonis* the first heir of his *invention.*

126. *Frize* or *frieze*—a rough woollen cloth. Birdlime sticks so fast on it that it cannot be taken away without tearing out some of the wool,

brains and all. But my Muse labours, and thus she is deliver'd.

If she be fair and wise, fairness and wit,
The one 's for use, the other useth it.

Des. Well prais'd! How if she be black and witty?

Iago. If she be black, and thereto have a wit,
She 'll find a white that shall her blackness fit.

Des. Worse and worse.

Emil. How if fair and foolish?

Iago. She never yet was foolish that was fair;
For even her folly help'd her to an heir.

Des. These are old fond paradoxes to make fools laugh i' the alehouse. What miserable praise hast thou for her that 's foul and foolish?

Iago. There 's none so foul and foolish thereunto,
But does foul pranks which fair and wise ones do.

Des. Oh, heavy ignorance! thou praisest the worst best. But what praise couldst thou bestow on a deserving woman indeed, one that in the authority of her merit did justly put on the vouch of very malice itself?

Iago. She that was ever fair and never proud,
Had tongue at will and yet was never loud;
Never lack'd gold and yet went never gay,

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131. *Black.* Dark (in complexion).

133. *White.* There is a play on '*white*' and '*wight*' (Schmidt).

137. *Folly.* There is a play on this word here. It means '*foolishness*' as well as '*wantonness,*' '*unchastity.*' See V. ii.. 'She turned to folly, and she was a whore.'

138–40. The quartos print this as three lines of verse, ending *alehouse ... her ... foolish?*

Fond. Foolish, silly. So, in I. iii. 318 *ante.*

145–7. *One that in the authority ... malice itself.* 'One who, in the consciousness of her own merit and the authority her character had with every one, durst venture to call upon malice itself to vouch (give testimony) in her behalf.' 'To put on the vouch of malice' is to assume a character vouched by the testimony of malice itself (Johnson).

150. *Never went gay.* 'Never dressed herself in tawdry finery.'

Fled from her wish and yet said 'Now I may;'
She that being anger'd, her revenge being nigh,
Bade her wrong stay and her displeasure fly;
She that in wisdom never was so frail
To change the cod's head for the salmon's tail;
She that could think and ne'er disclose her mind,
See suitors following and not look behind;
She was a wight, if ever such wights were,—

Des. To do what?

Iago. To suckle fools and chronicle small beer.

Des. Oh, most lame and impotent conclusion!—Do not learn of him, Emilia, though he be thy husband.—How say you, Cassio? is he not a most profane and liberal counsellor?

Cas. He speaks home, madam; you may relish him more in the soldier than in the scholar.

Iago. [*Aside*] He takes her by the palm: ay, well said, whisper; with as little a web as this will I ensnare as great a fly as Cassio. Ay, smile upon her, do; I will gyve thee in thine own courtship. You say true;

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151. *Fled from her wish ... may.* Turned away from temptation even when she could gratify her desires with impunity.

155. *To change the cod's head ... salmon's tail.* 'To exchange a delicacy for a coarser fare' (Steevens). 'To give up the best part of a homely thing for the worst part of something very fine' (White). The reference is to Othello whom Desdemona had chosen in preference to the wealthy curled darlings of Venice (Purnell).

158. *Wight*—originally meant 'person' and applied to both sexes.

160. *Chronicle small beer.* 'Keep petty household accounts.'

161. *Oh, most lame ... conclusion.* 'A very poor conclusion to so ambitious a prelude.'

163-4. *Profane and liberal counseller.* 'Coarse and wanton talker.'

165. *Home.* 'That is, without reserve' (Schmidt).

167. *Well said.* 'That is, well done' (Schmidt). So in IV. i. 'Now he importunes him to tell it o'er: go to, well said, well said.' Also V. i. [*A chair brought in.*] 'Oh, that's well said; the chair.'

170. *Gyve.* 'Fetter,' 'shackle.'

Courtship. Courtesy, courteous behaviour. Cf. *L. L. L.* V. ii. 363: 'Trim gallants, full of courtship and of state.'

'tis so, indeed: if such tricks as these strip you out of your lieutenantry, it had been better you had not kissed your three fingers so oft, which now again you are most apt to play the sir in. Very good; well kissed! an excellent courtesy! 'tis so, indeed. Yet again your fingers to your lips? Would they were clyster-pipes for your sake.—[*Trumpet within.*] The Moor! I know his trumpet. 178

Cas. 'T is truly so.

Des. Let 's meet him and receive him.

Cas. Lo, where he comes! 181

Enter OTHELLO *and* Attendants.

Oth. O my fair warrior!

Des. My dear Othello!

Oth. It gives me wonder great as my content 183
To see you here before me. O my soul's joy!
If after every tempest come such calms,
May the winds blow till they have waken'd death! 186

170-1. *You say true ... indeed.* 'This is in answer to Cassio's last speech' (Delius). Viz., ll. 165-6: 'He speaks home, madam, etc.'

174. *Play the sir.* 'Show your good breeding and gallantry.' (Henley). 'Play the fine gentleman and courtier.'

175. *An excellent courtesy.* Cassio bows to Desdemona while kissing his fingers. 'Courtesy' was formerly applied to a man's as well as to a woman's act of salutation.

182. *My fair warrior.* My fair conqueror, my fair captain—a pretty title which Othello, out of fondness and affection applies to Desdemona. Cf. *A. W.* I. i. 110, *et seq.* French sonneteers often called their mistresses *guerrières* (warriors) and Steevens gives sundry quotations to show that they have had English imitators. Othello's exuberant love for Desdemona is ever combined with the consciousness that her divine beauty had conquerred him and induced him to enter into the wedded state. It is very tame to make him address Desdemona as his 'fair warrior,' in allusion to her having followed him to the wars, disliking "to be left behind, a moth of peace."

183. *Wonder,* because she had started *after* him and come *before.*
Content. Happiness, joy. Cf. ll. 191, 196.

186. *Till ... death.* So loudly as even to wake the dead.

And let the labouring bark climb hills of seas
Olympus-high, and duck again as low
As hell 's from heaven! If it were now to die,
'T were now to be most happy; for, I fear,
My soul hath her content so absolute
That not another comfort like to this
Succeeds in unknown fate.

Des. The heavens forbid
But that our loves and comforts should increase,
Even as our days do grow.

Oth. Amen to that, sweet powers!
I cannot speak enough of this content;
It stops me here; it is too much of joy:
And this, and this, the greatest discords be [*Kissing her.*
That e'er our hearts shall make!

Iago. [*Aside*] Oh, you are well tun'd now!
But I 'll set down the pegs that make this music,
As honest as I am.

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187. *Climb hills of seas.* Cf. 'The sea making *mountaines* of itself, over which the tossed and tottering ship should *climbe,* to be straight carried downe againe to a *pit of hellish darknesse.*' Sidney's Arcadia, 1590, b. i. (Steevens).

188. *Olympus-high.* As high as Mount Olympus (the fabled abode of the Greek Gods).

Duck—stoop, dive. Othello says 'I am content to suffer the greatest trouble if only it should be succeeded by such joy and happiness as has fallen to my lot just now.'

197. *It stops me here.* (Laying his hand on his breast.) It swells my heart and chokes my utterance.

198-9. *And this ... make!* 'Let these kisses be the greatest discords that ever come between us! Malone quotes from Marlowe's *Lust's Dominion*: 'I pri'thee chide, if I have done amiss, But let my punishment be *this and this* [*Kissing the Moor.*'

200. *Well-tuned.* In perfect harmony with each other (like the strings of a well-tuned harp.)

201. *Set down.* Let down, lower, unscrew. Iago says he will work upon the feelings which produce this perfect harmony and happiness.

202. *As honest as I am.* Honest man that I pass for. (Said with a grin of malicious sarcasm.)

Oth. Come, let us to the castle.
News, friends; our wars are done, the Turks are drown'd.
How does my old acquaintance of this isle?—
Honey, you shall be well desir'd in Cyprus;
I have found great love amongst them. Oh, my sweet,
I prattle out of fashion, and I dote
In mine own comforts.—I prithee, good Iago,
Go to the bay and disembark my coffers;
Bring thou the master to the citadel;
He is a good one, and his worthiness
Does challenge much respect.—Come, Desdemona.—
Once more, well met at Cyprus.

[*Exeunt Othello, Desdemona, and Attendants.*

Iago. Do thou meet me presently at the harbour.—Come hither.—If thou be'st valiant,—as, they say, base men being in love have then a nobility in their natures more than is native to them,—list me. The lieutenant to-night watches on the court of guard. First, I must tell thee this—Desdemona is directly in love with him.

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204. *My old acquaintance ... isle.* My old friends of this place. 'Acquaintance' is here a noun of multitude.

205. *Well-desired.* Greatly loved and sought after. 'Well beloved, a favourite.'

207. *Out of fashion.* Out of method, without any settled order of discourse' (Johnson).

207-8. *I dote in mine own comforts.* Feeling happy and joyous in the extreme, I talk on in a foolish manner.

210. *Master.* 'The captain of the ship.'

212. *Challenge.* Call for, demand.

213. *Once more, well met at Cyprus.* Said to the people. 'I am glad to meet you.'

214. *Do thou meet ... Come hither.* Q. I. Why does Iago first tell Roderigo to meet him at the harbour and then immediately afterwards call him near and enter into a lengthy conversation with him?

218. *The court of guard.* 'The place where the Guard musters' (Steevens). Q. How did Iago come to know that the lieutenant was to watch on the court of guard that night?

219. *Directly.* Unmistakeably.

Rod. With him! why, 't is not possible.

Iago. Lay thy finger thus, and let thy soul be instructed. Mark me with what violence she first loved the Moor, but for bragging and telling her fantastical lies; and will she love him still for prating? let not thy discreet heart think it. Her eye must be fed; and what delight shall she have to look on the devil? When the blood is made dull by the act of sport, there should be, again to inflame it and to give satiety a fresh appetite, loveliness in favour, sympathy in years, manners, and beauties; all which the Moor is defective in. Now, for want of these required conveniences, her delicate tenderness will find itself abused, begin to heave the gorge, desrelish and abhor the Moor; very nature will instruct her in it, and compel her to some second choice. Now, sir, this granted,—as it is a most pregnant and unforced position—who stands so eminent in the degree of this fortune as Cassio does? a knave very voluble; no further conscionable than in putting

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222. *Lay thy finger thus.* That is, 'on thy mouth, to stop it while thou art listening to a wiser man.' (Johnson).

224. *Fantastical lies; and will she love him still, etc.* This is the quarto reading. The folio reads: 'fantastical lies. To love him still, etc.'

226. *Discreet.* Discerning.

230. *Favour.* 'Personal appearance.'

232. *Required conveniences.* Requisite attractions.

232-3. *Her delicate ... abused.* Her delicate and tender nature will find itself deceived and disappointed.

233-4. *Heave the gorge.* Get sick and tired of him. *Gorge*—swallow. Cf. *Ham.* V. i. 207: 'My gorge rises at it' (I am inclined to vomit).

234. *Very nature.* 'Nature herself, without any external promptings.'

236. *Pregnant.* 'Probable', 'full of plausibility,' 'teeming with truth.'

237. *Unforced*—Natural.

238. *In the degree of this fortune.* In the ascent to this fortune. Cf. '*grise*' in I. iii. 200.

239. *Voluble.* 'Not fluent in speech, as the word now imports, but *fickle, inconstant*' (Staunton).

Conscionable. 'Conscientious.'

on the mere form of civil and humane seeming, for the better compassing of his salt and most hidden loose affection? why, none; why, none: a slipper and subtle knave, a finder of occasions, that has an eye can stamp and counterfeit advantages, though true advantage never present itself; a devilish knave! Besides, the knave is handsome, young, and hath all those requisites in him that folly and green minds look after: a pestilent complete knave; and the woman hath found him already.

Rod. I cannot believe that in her; she's full of most blessed condition.

Iago. Blessed fig's end! the wine she drinks is made of grapes; if she had been blessed, she would never have loved the Moor. Blessed pudding! Didst thou not see her paddle with the palm of his hand? didst not mark that?

Rod. Yes, that I did; but that was but courtesy.

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240. *The mere form ... seeming.* 'The mere appearance of politeness and benevolence.'

241. *Salt.* 'Lustful', 'licentious.' Cf. *M. for M.* V. i. 406: 'Whose salt imagination yet hath wrong'd your well-defended honour.'

Most hidden. Carefully concealed.

242. *Slipper.* 'Slippery', untrustworthy.

A finder of occasions. 'One who manages to find out opportunities for effecting his unholy purposes.'

243-5. *Can stamp ... itself.* 'Can forge and create for himself, favourable opportunities for the satisfaction of his desires when no such opportunities offer themselves.'

247. *Green.* 'Inexperienced', 'immature.'

248. *The woman hath found him already.* 'Her instincts have already pointed him out as a man suited for her amorous purposes.'

251. *Blessed.* — holy.

Condition. 'Qualities, disposition of mind' (Johnson). Cf. IV. i. 'of so gentle a condition.'

252. *Blessed fig's-end!* 'You might as well talk of a blessed fig's-end!' Cf. I. iii. 319; 'Virtue! a fig!'

255. *Paddle.* A corruption of '*pattle*', to pat gently (Purnell). 'Play with in a fond manner.'

Iago. Lechery, by this hand; an index and obscure prologue to the history of lust and foul thoughts. They met so near with their lips that their breaths embraced together. Villanous thoughts, Roderigo! when these mutualities so marshal the way, hard at hand comes the master and main exercise, the incorporate conclusion. Pish! But, sir, be you ruled by me; I have brought you from Venice. Watch you to-night; for the command I 'll lay 't upon you. Cassio knows you not. I 'll not be far from you; do you find some occasion to anger Cassio, either by speaking too loud, or tainting his discipline, or from what other course you please, which the time shall more favourably minister.

Rod. Well.

Iago. Sir, he is rash and very sudden in choler, and haply may strike at you: provoke him that he may; for even out of that will I cause these of Cyprus to mutiny, whose qualification shall come into no true taste again but by the displanting of Cassio. So shall you have a shorter journey to your desires by the

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258. *Index.* Indication. 'The index used formerly to be placed at the beginning of a book, not at the end, as now (Edwards). Cf. *Ham.* III. iv. 52. 'Ah me, what act that roars so loud and thunders in the index?'

262. *Mutualities.* Mutual familiarities; courtesies exchanged with each other.

Marshal. Lead, point out.

263. *The incorporate conclusion.* 'The bodily sin which concludes these preliminaries.'

265. *Watch you to-night ... you.* Form one of the guard to-night. I shall fix the duty on you and issue the order.

266. *Cassio knows you not.* Because Roderigo is disguised, having 'defeated his favour with an usurped beard.'

268. *Tainting.* 'Throwing a slur upon' (Johnson); 'discrediting.'

272. *Sudden.* Hasty, impetuous.

275. *Qualification.* 'Appeasement,' 'pacification.' Johnson explains the passage as follows: 'Whose resentment shall not be so *qualified* or *tempered* as to be *well* tasted, as not to retain *some bitterness.*' Cf. 'qualified' in II. iii. 40.

means I shall then have to prefer them; and the impediment most profitably removed, without the which there were no expectation of our prosperity.

Rod. I will do this, if you can bring it to any opportunity.

Iago. I warrant thee. Meet me by and by at the citadel; I must fetch his necessaries ashore. Farewell.

Rod. Adieu. [*Exit.*

Iago. That Cassio loves her, I do well believe it;
That she loves him, 'tis apt and of great credit:
The Moor, howbeit that I endure him not,
Is of a constant, loving, noble nature,
And I dare think he 'll prove to Desdemona
A most dear husband. Now, I do love her too;
Not out of absolute lust, though peradventure
I stand accountant for as great a sin,
But partly led to diet my revenge,
For that I do suspect the lusty Moor

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278. *Prefer.* 'Advance,' 'promote.'

280. *Prosperity.* 'Success.' Cf. *L. L. L.* V. ii. 871: 'A jest's prosperity lies in the ear of him that hears it, never in the tongue Of him that makes it.'

281. *If you can ... opportunity.* If you can create the opportunity (facility) for it. The quarto reading is 'If *I* can' which the poet evidently changed into 'If *you* can' in the folio, to indicate that Roderigo relied on his friend for the opportunity. Besides, the folio reading agrees better with Iago's assurance 'I warrant thee' as well as with the fact that Iago does actually create the opportunity afterwards.

284. *His necessaries.* The Moor's luggage. See l. 209, *ante*. Cf. *Ham.* I. iii. 1: 'My necessaries are embark'd.' The Cowden-Clarkes remark: "Even the word '*his*' here in reference to Othello, without naming him or giving him his title, has characteristic effect in Iago's mouth as a piece of cool, off-hand, slighting mention; and therefore calculated to confirm the impression he wishes to produce upon Roderigo of hatred towards the Moor."

287. *Apt ... credit.* Natural and easy to believe.

291. *Dear.* Loving, affectionate.

292. *Peradventure.* Perhaps—meaning 'I am sure.'

294. *Partly*—meaning 'wholly' (Swinburne).

Hath leap'd into my seat: the thought whereof
Doth like a poisonous mineral gnaw my inwards; 297
And nothing can or shall content my soul
Till I am even'd with him, wife for wife,
Or failing so, yet that I put the Moor
At least into a jealousy so strong
That judgment cannot cure. Which thing to do,
If this poor trash of Venice, whom I trace 303
For his quick hunting, stand the putting on,

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297. *Inwards*—here means 'mind.'

303. *If this poor trash ... trace.* This is another passage in which the needless emendation of editors has resulted in the obscuration of the meaning. The 1st quarto reads 'whom I *crush* (i. e., press, urge, goad, whip) in place of 'whom I *trace*' (i. e., put in traces, harness)—the folio reading,—and both lections make good sense. But commentators, unable to perceive it or wishing to make good better, have made it worse by substituting '*trash*,' for '*trace*,' and interpreting it as equivalent to '*check*' or '*keep back*,' assuming that Roderigo was an impatient hound in his pursuit of Desdemona and Iago was endeavouring to restrain him and control him. This assumption for which Steevens is primarily responsible is a manifest blunder into which even Knight has fallen; for, though he retains '*trace*' of the folio, he interprets it to mean 'put in traces, confine, restrain.' Keightley was the first to point out "that Roderigo did not require to be *trashed* or checked 'for his quick hunting,' for he was always hanging back and ready to give up the chase till urged on by Iago," and Furness, following Halliwell's note rightly points out that the phrase 'for his quick hunting' does not mean, 'because of his quick hunting,' but '*in order to* make him, *for the purpose* of making him, hunt quickly'; but neither Keightley nor Halliwell nor his follower has hit upon the right meaning of '*trace*.' Keightley proposes to read '*train*' or '*praise*' instead of 'trace' while Halliwell explains the passage as meaning: 'If this wretched fellow, *whose steps I carefully watch* in order to quicken his pace, follow my directions, I will have our Michael Cassio on the hip." The simple meaning of the passage is:—'If this worthless fool whom I am now putting in traces, (i. e., harnessing to my purpose), with a view to drive him and whip him into quick hunting, stand the putting on of the traces (i. e., hold on to the enterprise) and proceeding under my direction promptly and boldly pick a quarrel with Cassio, I am quite sure of catching the lieutenant on the hip.'

Trash. A worthless fellow. See V. i. 'I do suspect this *trash*,' meaning 'a worthless woman.'

Trace. Put in traces; harness (for the purpose of securing, *not* training, quick hunting). In the folio, Shakespeare changed '*crush*'

I 'll have our Michael Cassio on the hip,
Abuse him to the Moor in the right garb—
For I fear Cassio with my nightcap too—
Make the Moor thank me, love me, and reward me,
For making him egregiously an ass
And practising upon his peace and quiet
Even to madness. 'T is here, but yet confus'd;
Knavery's plain face is never seen till us'd. [*Exit.*

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into '*trace*' as coming nearer 'trash' in sound and keeping up the metaphor better.

305. *Have ... on the hip.* A wrestling phrase, meaning 'have an antagonist at thorough disadvantage,' 'have him completely in one's power.'

306. *In the right garb.* '*Rank* garb' is the quarto reading which almost all editors (excepting Knight and Furness) adopt, interpreting the phrase to mean 'in the coarsest fashion,' 'in the most rampantly free style,' 'without mincing the matter.' The folio text undoubtedly furnishes the correct reading. A cunning villain like Iago would never go on abusing his enemy in the *rank* garb, but in the *right* garb (which may be rank), according to occasion and circumstances. Besides, he was yet but vaguely settled about his plan of action. [ll. 311-2].

307. *I fear Cassio ... too.* 'I am suspicious also of Cassio's intimacy with my wife.'

310. *Practising upon.* Plotting against.

311. *Even to madness.* Even to the degree of driving him mad.

Here. In my brain.

312. *Knavery's plain face ... used.* 'The full design of knavery is never visible (even to the knave) until the moment comes for its being put in practice.' A knavish plot, being always subject to modification according to opportunity and circumstances, never assumes its exact form until the moment for action has arrived. "An honest man" says Johnson "acts upon a plan, and forecasts his designs; but a knave depends upon temporary and local opportunities, and never knows his own purpose but at the time of execution."

Scene II. *In front of the Castle.*

Enter a Herald *with a proclamation;* People *following.*

Herald. It is Othello's pleasure, our noble and valiant general, that, upon certain tidings now arrived, importing the mere perdition of the Turkish fleet, every man put himself into triumph; some to dance, some to make bonfires, each man to what sport and revels his addition leads him: for, besides these beneficial news, it is the celebration of his nuptial. So much was his pleasure should be proclaimed. All offices are open, and there is full liberty of feasting from this present hour of five till the bell have told eleven. Heaven bless the isle of Cyprus and our noble general Othello! [*Exeunt.*

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3. *Mere perdition.* 'Utter, complete destruction.'

4. *Put himself into triumph.* 'Give himself up to exultation'; 'rejoice and make merry.'

6. *Addition.* The first quarto has '*mind*' in place of 'addition' and the later quartos read '*addiction*' which almost all editors (except Furness) adopt, interpreting the word to mean 'natural inclination.' Dyce calls '*addition*' a stark misprint, but all the same it seems to be the word used by the pompous Herald, "who has given us a taste of his quality in the stilted phrase, *put himself into triumph*." As Furness has pointed out, '*addition*' is used elsewhere by Shakespeare to signify '*quality*', '*natural bent*'; e. g., in *Tr. & Cr.* (I. ii. 24) where Alexander says that Ajax 'hath robbed many beasts of their particular additions; he is as valiant as the lion, churlish as the bear, slow as the elephant.' Each man is to betake himself to what sport or revel his particular disposition leads him to indulge in. *Addiction*, says the learned editor of the *New Variorum*, is a cacophonous word, never used by Shakespeare, except in one other passage.

Beneficial news. Favourable or good news.

9. *All offices are open.* 'All the public rooms in the castle are open for the reception of guests.' *Offices.* The rooms or places in the castle where refreshments were prepared and served out (Steevens).

SCENE III. *A Hall in the Castle.*

Enter OTHELLO, DESDEMONA, CASSIO, *and* Attend- [ants.

Oth. Good Michael, look you to the guard to-night;
Let 's teach ourselves that honourable stop,
Not to outsport discretion.

Cas. Iago hath direction what to do;
But, notwithstanding, with my personal eye
Will I look to 't.

Oth. Iago is most honest.
Michael, good night; to-morrow with your earliest
Let me have speech with you.—[*To Des.*] Come, my dear love,
The purchase made, the fruits are to ensue;
That profit's yet to come 'tween me and you.—
Good night. [*Exeunt Othello, Desdemona, & Attendts.*

Enter IAGO.

Cas. Welcome, Iago; we must to the watch.

Iago. Not this hour, lieutenant; 't is not yet ten o' the clock. Our general cast us thus early for the love of his Desdemona, who let us not therefore blame; he hath not yet made wanton the night with her, and she is sport for Jove.

SCENE III.—Neither the folio nor the quarto editions mark a new scene in this place, though the Herald's proclamation would best form the subject of a scene by itself, there being an internal of at least five hours between it and what follows. Shakespeare marked the whole as one scene probably because the same curtain, representing the Castle, did service throughout. The proclamation in Scene II. is made in front of the Castle and we are to understand that it is subsequently repeated in the principal streets of the town. Sc. III. takes place in a Hall of the Castle.

2,3. *Let's teach ... discretion.* Let us observe the right limit to our feasting and merriment and not permit it to go beyond the bounds of discretion.

14. *Cast us.* Dismissed us; sent us off to our posts. Cf. I. i. 149.

Cas. She 's a most exquisite lady.

Iago. And I'll warrant her full of game.

Cas. Indeed she's a most fresh and delicate creature.

Iago. What an eye she has! methinks it sounds a parley of provocation. 23

Cas. An inviting eye; and yet methinks right modest.

Iago. And when she speaks, is it not an alarum to love? 27

Cas. She is indeed perfection.

Iago. Well, happiness to their sheets! Come lieutenant, I have a stoup of wine; and here without are a brace of Cyprus gallants that would fain have a measure to the health of black Othello. 32

Cas. Not to-night, good Iago. I have very poor and unhappy brains for drinking; I could well wish courtesy would invent some other custom of entertainment.

Iago. Oh, they are our friends; but one cup: I 'll drink for you. 38

Cas. I have drunk but one cup to-night, and that was craftily qualified too, and behold what innovation

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22,23. *Sounds a parley of provocation.* Invites conversation and temptation. A military metaphor. 'To sound a parley' is to sound a trumpet as a signal for holding a conference with the enemy. Ordinarily a parley is sounded to desire a *cessation* of hostilities. Desdemona's eye, Iago says, sounds a parley *of provocation*, i. e., desiring hostilities. The insinuation is that her look sends forth a plain invitation to people to approach her with proposals of love. Cf. *M. of V.* I. i. 164. 'From her eyes I did receive fair speechless messages.' Also *Tr. & Cr.* IV. v. 55: There's language in her eye, her cheek, her lip, Nay her foot speaks.'

26. *An alarum.* A call. From Ital. *all'arme,* to arms!

30. *Stoup.* Cup, flagon.

40. *Craftily qualified.* Slyly diluted with water (that is by himself). *Slyly,* lest the rest of the company remark that he was not freely and fully inclined to merriment, and took care not to lose himself in it.

Innovation. Change.

it makes here. I am unfortunate in the infirmity, and dare not task my weakness with any more.

Iago. What, man! 't is a night of revels; the gallants desire it.

Cas. Where are they?

Iago. Here at the door; I pray you, call them in.

Cas. I 'll do 't; but it dislikes me. [*Exit.*

Iago. If I can fasten but one cup upon him,
With that which he hath drunk to-night already,
He 'll be as full of quarrel and offence
As my young mistress' dog. Now, my sick fool Roderigo,
Whom love hath turn'd almost the wrong side out,
To Desdemona hath to-night carous'd
Potations pottle-deep; and he 's to watch.
Three elves of Cyprus,—noble swelling spirits,
That hold their honours in a wary distance,

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41. *Here* — touching his head.

47. *It dislikes me.* 'It displeases me.' 'I do it unwillingly.'

50. *As full ... offence.* As ready to quarrel and take offence at the slightest thing.

51. *As ... dog.* Lap-dogs, being spoiled by their mistresses, are often quarrelsome.

52. *Whom love ... out.* Whom love has almost driven mad. Cf. IV. ii. 'That turned your wits the seamy side without.'

53. *Caroused.* Drunk.

54. *Potations.* Draughts. *Pottle-deep.* 'To the bottom of the pottle or tankard.' *And he's to watch.* And I have appointed him as one of to-night's guard.

55. *Three elves of Cyprus* — referring to the 'Cyprus gallants.' The quarto reading is 'Three *lads* of Cyprus', which editors generally adopt. The folio has 'Three *else* of Cyprus.' Collier corrects *else* into '*elves*', and there is no doubt 'else' is a misprint for '*elves*.' 'Elves' is an improvement on 'lads' and fits in very well with the words 'spirit' and 'elements' which follow, as well as with the idea that they were young, fashionable gallants of Cyprus, full of spirit and ready to quarrel.

56. *That hold ... distance.* 'Who are very sensitive touching their honour', 'quick to take offence at any fancied insult.'

The very elements of this warlike isle,—
Have I to-night fluster'd with flowing cups,
And they watch too. Now, 'mongst this flock of drunkards,
Am I to put our Cassio in some action
That may offend the isle.—But here they come:

Enter CASSIO; *with him* MONTANO *and* Gentlemen; *Servants following with wine.*

If consequence do but approve my dream,
My boat sails freely, both with wind and stream.

Cas. 'Fore heaven, they have given me a rouse already.

Mon. Good faith, a little one; not past a pint, as I am a soldier.

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57. *The very elements.* "As quarrelsome as the *discordia semina rerum*; as quick in opposition as fire and water' (Johnson). I am sure there is no reference here to any natural antagonism *between themselves* but only to the powerful and dangerous character of each. '*Elements*' is clearly used here in the sense of 'elemental spirits,' i. e., supernatural beings supposed to preside over the four elements, living in and ruling them.

58. *Flustered.* Made hot with drink, excited, confused.

60. *Put ... action.* That is, induce him to do some deed.

62-3. *If consequence ... stream.* If the result do but justify (tally with) my expectation, my scheme shall soon attain its fullest success.

64. *Rouse.* 'A large glass ... in which a health was given, the drinking of which by the rest of the company formed a *carouse* ... In process of time both these words were used in a laxer sense.' (Gifford). *A rouse* here means 'a bumper, or too deep a draught' (Rolfe).

66. Steevens and other critics have expressed the opinion that the part Montano takes in the carouse is not consistent with his former position as governor of Cyprus, and Booth doubts (says Furness) if Shakespeare meant to have Montano take part in this carouse, and therefore makes him enter later from a different direction just in time to see Cassio stagger off. It will be seen from the Exposition that Montano does take part in the carouse, and all doubts and difficulties will vanish when the consummate art of the villian Iago is fully perceived. As it is, we only see the *result* of his plans which are completely hidden from our view.

Iago. Some wine, ho! [*Sings*]

And let me the canakin clink, clink!
And let me the canakin clink!
A soldier 's a man;
Oh, man's life 's but a span;
Why, then, let a soldier drink!

Some wine, boys!

Cas. 'Fore heaven, an excellent song.

Iago. I learned it in England, where, indeed, they are most potent in potting; your Dane, your German, and your swag-bellied Hollander—Drink, ho!—are nothing to your English.

Cas. Is your Englishman so exquisite in his drinking?

Iago. Why, he drinks you with facility your Dane dead drunk; he sweats not to overthrow your Almain; he gives your Hollander a vomit ere the next pottle can be filled.

Cas. To the health of our general!

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69. *Canakin.* A diminutive of *can.*

77. *Potent in potting.* 'Mighty drinkers.'

78. *Swag-bellied.* Having a large, overhanging belly.

80. *Exquisite.* The first quarto has 'expert.' The Cowden-Clarkes point out that '*exquisite*' is a favourite word with Cassio and consequently makes the better reading. See l. 18 *ante,* 'She is a most exquisite lady,' and again l. 98 'This is a more exquisite song than the other.'

83. *Almain.* German (Fr. *Allemand).*

83-5. 'This accomplishment in the English is likewise mentioned in B. and F.'s *The Captain*:—*Lod.* Are the Englishmen Such stubborn drinkers? *Piso.* Not a leak at sea Can suck more liquor; you shall have their children Christen'd in mull'd sack, and at five years old, Able to knock a Dane down' (Steevens). Peacham, in his *Compleat Gentleman,* 1622, has a section entitled, 'Drinking the Plague of our English Gentry,' in which he says, 'Within these fiftie or three score yeares it was a rare thing with us to see a drunken man, our nation carrying the name of the most sober and temperate of any other in the world. But since we had to doe in the quarrell of the Netherlands ... the custom of drinking and pledging healthes was brought over into England; wherein let the Dutch be their owne judges, if we equall them not; yea I think

Mon. I am for it, lieutenant; and I 'll do you justice.
Iago. O sweet England! [*Sings*]

King Stephen was and-a worthy peer, 89
His breeches cost him but a crown;
He held them sixpence all too dear,
With that he call'd the tailor lown.
He was a wight of high renown,
And thou art but of low degree:
'T is pride that pulls the country down;
Then take thine auld cloak about thee.

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rather excell them.' (Singer). On the intemperance of the Danes, see *Ham.* I. iv.

87. *I'll do you justice.* That is, drink my fair share of the liquor.

89-96. These lines are taken, with slight variation, from an old ballad, "*Take thy old cloak about thee*" which is reproduced in Percy's Reliques. It is a dialogue between a country-wife and her husband. Bell, the wife, tells her husband to put on his old cloak about him and go save the life of their good cow suffering from the severe winter's cold and frost. The husband pleads that the cloak is very thin, 'bare and overworne,' and proposes to go to town the next day and get a new cloak made for him. The cow had always been a very good cow and had ever helped them to butter and cheese; and the good wife, loth to see her suffer, entreats the husband to take counsel of her and not to 'go so fine' but to put on his old cloak about him and go save the cow. The husband is however unwilling to put on the old cloak, which was no doubt a good thing four and forty years ago when it was first made and had served him long very well, but now only a 'sigh clout' (straining clout) which will hold out neither wind nor rain; and he *will* have a new cloak about him. Thereupon, the wife rebukes him and begs him to recollect their condition during these four and forty years,—they had been good, honest family people and had a number of children who were all brought up in the fear of God and were now grown up to men and women,—and she entreats him not to mistake himself but to put on his old cloak.

HE

O Bell my wiffe, why dost thou 'floute!'
Now is nowe, and then was then:
Seeke now all the world throughout,
Thou kenst not clownes from gentlemen.
They are cladd in blacke, greene, yellowe, 'gray,'
Soe far above their owne degree:
Once in my life Ile 'doe as they,'
For Ile have a new cloake about mee.

Some wine, ho!

Cas. Why, this is a more exquisite song than the other.

Iago. Will you hear 't again?

Cas. No; for I hold him to be unworthy of his place that does those things. Well, heaven 's above all; and there be souls must be saved, and there be souls must not be saved.

Iago. It 's true, good lieutenant.

Cas. For mine own part,—no offence to the general, nor any man of quality,—I hope to be saved.

Iago. And so do I too, lieutenant.

Cas. Ay, but, by your leave, not before me; the lieutenant is to be saved before the ancient. Let 's have

---

SHE

King Stephen was a worthy peere,
  His breches cost him but a crowne,
He held them sixpence all too deere;
  Therefore he called the taylor Lowne. *(rascal)*
He was a wight of high renowne,
  And thouse *(thou art)* but of a low degree.
Itt's pride that putts this countrye downe,
  Man, take thine old cloake about thee.

HE

'Bell my wife she loves not strife,
  Yet she will lead me if she can;
And oft, to live a quiet life,
  I am forced to yield, though I me good-man;'
Itt's not for a man with a woman to threape *(argue)*
  Unlesse he first gave oer the plea: *(controversy)*
As wee began wee now will leave,
  And Ile take mine old cloake about mee.

89. *And-a.* Signifies nothing more than 'and he was a.' The first quarto omits '*and*,' but '*and-a*' reads infinitely better than the mere 'a', and, as Furness remarks, gives a most happy 'swing to the rhythm and a charm of homeliness to the verse.'

Peer. 'Lord, a title frequently bestowed upon *kings* in our old romances' (Ritson).

107. *Quality.* Rank.

no more of this; let 's to our affairs.—Forgive us our sins!—Gentlemen, let 's look to our business.—

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111. *Forgive us our sins!* "The 'traditional business', said to be Charles Kemble's, cannot be improved upon. Cassio drops his handkerchief, and in his effort to recover it, falls on his knees; to account for this position to his companions, he attempts to pray. His clothes being awry, his sword has slipped to his right side, and this confuses him for a moment as to which is his right or his left hand."—(Booth quoted by Furness). Kemble's 'business' may produce good enough effect on the stage, but it is clear that Cassio's thoughts and words do not owe their origin either to the dropping down of his handkerchief or the slipping of his sword. Intoxicated with wine as he is, the one fixed idea in his mind, which he is determined to keep uppermost and to which he turns again and again, is that he should not forget his duty. Cassio presents to us the figure — *not* of a man who has courted the pleasure of drinking and yields to its effects without resistance, trying however to keep up an appearance of sobriety, e. g., by praying with a view to account for a fall on the knees, but — of one, with poor brains for wine, who, knowing his weakness, has allowed his enemy to get into his mouth yet is endeavouring to keep it from his brain. Despite his resolution not to lose himself in revelry but to go forthwith to his duty, Cassio has so far fallen under the influence of his enemy as to find delight in the merry songs of his ancient and pronounced them to be 'excellent' and 'exquisite.' The idea that he was staying away from duty however presents itself and when his good friend offers to repeat the song and asks him "Will you hear't again?" "No" says the resisting victim, and adds, "I hold him to be unworthy of his place that does those things", (i. e., neglects his duty, and goes on drinking and singing and listening to ribald songs). In spite of his intoxication, Cassio feels sorry for having indulged in "those things" even for a short while, but he consoles himself with the thought that God, who is above all, knows who was and who was not to blame in the matter. *His* soul was free from all taint, for he had not joined the carouse of his own accord or willingly, but his comrades' souls, he felt sure, were heavy with sin, for they had forcibly tempted him away from his duty. This leads him into a tipsy talk about "souls must be saved" and "souls must not be saved", and Iago spurs him on. But soon after, the lieutenant's head clears up a bit,—so determined is he to remember his duty in spite of the wine,—he sees that he is losing himself in talk and revelry, resolves not to stay there a minute longer, and starts to go out, saying—"Let's have no more of this; let's to our affairs." Feeling however quite drowsy and inclined to sleep, he finds it impossible to stand straight or to walk without reeling and supports himself by laying hold on a chair close by. He now realises the condition to which he has brought himself and feels his own sin quite as great as that of his friends. This makes him utter a short prayer, "Forgive us our sins!" and he

Do not think, gentlemen, I am drunk: this is my ancient; this is my right hand, and this is my left. I am not drunk now; I can stand well enough, and I speak well enough.

All. Excellent well.

Cas. Why, very well then; you must not think then that I am drunk. [*Exit.*

Mon. To the platform, masters; come, let 's set the watch.

Iago. You see this fellow that is gone before;
He is a soldier fit to stand by Cæsar

---

would have continued in that strain but for his resolution to resist all talk and to proceed to his place of duty. So, with very great effort, he keeps his eyes open and controls his tongue and says, "Gentlemen, let's look to our business", and makes another start to go. He has scarcely gone a few paces when, being about to fall down, he is approached by his friends who offer to help him. He is ashamed to find that he is betraying his drunken state, and makes an effort to shake off his drowsiness, and to assure himself and his friends that he is in full possession of his senses, he applies the military test which, in spite of his intoxication, he recollects at the moment. "Do not think, gentlemen, I am drunk;" says he, with an air of confidence, "this is my ancient; this is my right hand, and this is my left. I am not drunk now; I can stand well enough, and I speak well enough." Should they take him for a drunken man when he could recognise persons and tell his right hand from his left and stand well enough and speak well enough too! But alas! just as he uttered those words, drowsiness got the better of him, and his eyelids closing with their weight, he pointed Montano when he said "This is my ancient," and stretched his left hand when he talked of his right and *vice versâ;* and he could neither stand well nor speak well, though his companions echoed in one voice, "Excellent well." The poor man was too far 'gone' to perceive the irony, but the fixed idea about his duty does not leave him. So, opening his eyes again with effort, he goes off, saying, "Why, very well then; you must not think then that I am drunk." It is impossible however that Iago and Montano can fail to note his condition and pity him.

114. *This is my right hand.* 'A British soldier is not considered drunk if he can go through his facings.' (Purnell).

120. *The platform.* The terrace of the castle, where the sentries would be stationed. *Set the watch.* Station the guard at their posts.

123. *By Cæsar.* Alongside of — implying equality.

And give direction : and do but see his vice.
'T is to his virtue a just equinox,
The one as long as the other ; 't is pity of him.
I fear the trust Othello puts him in,
On some odd time of his infirmity,
Will shake this island.

Mon. But is he often thus ?

Iago. 'T is evermore the prologue to his sleep ;
He 'll watch the horologe a double set,
If drink rock not his cradle.

Mon. It were well
The general were put in mind of it.

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124. *His vice.* His weakness, his 'infirmity', viz., that he is easily and badly excited by drink. See ll. 34 & 41 *ante* and ll. 128 & 141 *infra.*

125. *His virtue.* Does not refer, as some editors have supposed, to Cassio's general merit as a soldier, but to the exact opposite of the vice just referred to. Iago says that this vice of Cassio (viz., his 'ingraft infirmity' which makes him utterly drowsy and useless when he drinks even a small measure) is as bad as his vigilance is extraordinary when he is free from drink. [See ll. 131-2].

Equinox. 'Equal', 'counterpart.' Iago says that Cassio's vice and virtue are exactly equal to each other, as night and day at the equinoxes ; i. e., his vice is of equal measure with his virtue.

127. *The trust.* The responsible office.

128. *On some odd time of his infirmity.* Because there could be no guarantee that he would never touch drink, or when he did that he would not, in his inebriate mood, do something which might create a commotion in the island and prove disastrous to it.

129. *Is he often thus ?* Is this often the case with him ? Is this the usual effect which drink produces upon him, or is it only to-day that it has so easily put him beside himself ?

130. *'Tis evermore ... sleep.* (Yes) and this condition is always a preface to his sleep. Iago means to say that Cassio's infirmity is so bad that soon after he takes even a small measure of drink, he is quite beside himself and immediately falls to sleep ; and he is then absolutely useless at his post — indeed a great pity in a soldier of such ability.

131-2. *He'll watch ... cradle.* If he does not drink and thereby lose all control over himself aud fall to sleep, he can keep awake while the clock strikes two rounds, or four and twenty hours, i. e., he can keep awake the whole night, even if it were twice as long. *Set* — revolution.

132-3. *It were well ... put in mind of it.* Surely Othello would not stand in need of Montano's revelation if the 'vice' of Cassio referred to

Perhaps he sees it not; or his good nature
Prizes the virtue that appears in Cassio,
And looks not on his evils; is not this true?

Enter RODERIGO.

Iago. [*Aside to him*] How now, Roderigo!
I pray you, after the lieutenant; go. [*Exit Roderigo.*

Mon. And 't is great pity that the noble Moor
Should hazard such a place as his own second
With one of an ingraft infirmity;
It were an honest action to say
So to the Moor.

Iago. Not I for this fair island;
I do love Cassio well, and would do much
To cure him of this evil—But, hark! what noise?
[*Cry within:* 'Help! help!'

Enter CASSIO, *pursuing* RODERIGO.

Cas. You rogue! you rascal!

Mon. What 's the matter, lieutenant?

Cas. A knave teach me my duty!
I 'll beat the knave into a twiggen bottle.

Rod. Beat me!

---

were *drunkenness*, and Iago is not a fool to instigate Montano to report to the general (what might easily be disproved) that Cassio is a *drunkard* and one, too, whose drunkenness is "a just equinox" to his great ability as a soldier! The truth is that Iago, knowing the lieutenant's weakness (his easy excitability under drink) has furnished an illustration of it to Montano and is cunningly trying to induce him to tell Othello that it is extremely hazardous to have for his second a man with such 'an ingraft infirmity.' Of course this infirmity could easily be proved—Cassio himself would admit it as indeed he did to Iago (ll. 33-4 and 41-42, *ante*)—and Othello would no more have him as his lieutenant.

141. *Ingraft.* 'Ingrafted', 'inveterate'; 'rooted or settled in the constitution.'

142. *Action.* A trissyllable. Cf. 'patience' in 365.

148. *A twiggen bottle.* A bottle cased in wicker-work. 'I will beat the rascal till he looks like a twiggen bottle.'

Cas. Dost thou prate, rogue?
[*Striking Roderigo.*
Mon. Nay, good lieutenant;
[*Staying him.*
I pray you, sir, hold your hand.
Cas. Let me go, sir,
Or I 'll knock you o'er the mazzard.
Mon. Come, come, you 're drunk.
Cas. Drunk! [*They fight.*
Iago. [*Aside to Rod.*] Away, I say; go out, and cry a mutiny. [*Exit Roderigo.*
Nay, good lieutenant,—alas, gentlemen!
Help, ho!—Lieutenant,—Sir Montano,—
Help, masters!—Here 's a goodly watch indeed!
[*Bell rings.*
Who 's that which rings the bell?—Diablo, ho!
The town will rise; fie, fie, lieutenant, hold!
You will be sham'd for ever.

Enter OTHELLO *and* Attendants.

Oth. What is the matter here?

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151. *Mazzard.* The head or skull, probably from *mazer*, a large drinking bowl, to which it is contemptuously compared.

You're drunk. You are beside yourself with drink.

157. *The bell.* According to Halliwell, 'at the poet's native town, Stratford-on-Avon, it has been the practice from time immemorial to ring the bell of the Guild chapel on the alarm of fire being given.' Malone says: "When David Rizzio was murdered in Edinburgh, the provost ordered the *common bell* to be rung, and five hundred persons were immediately assembled. So in Peacham's *Valley of Varietie*, where he is speaking of the use of bells, 'they call for helpe when houses in cities and townes are on fire; or when there is any mutinie or uproare.'"

Diablo. Spanish for 'devil.'

159. *Sham'd.* This is the quarto reading. The folio has '*asham'd*,' evidently a misprint. Iago does not appeal here to Cassio's feeling of self-respect but utters the words, "The town will rise; fie, fie, lieutenant, hold! You will be sham'd for ever," just as he hears Othello coming, so that the general may understand not only that the fault was all on

Mon. I bleed still; I am hurt to the death. He dies—
Oth. Hold, for your lives!
Iago. Hold, ho! Lieutenant,—Sir Montano,—gentlemen!—
Have you forgot all place of sense and duty?
Hold! the general speaks to you; hold, for shame!
Oth. Why, how now, ho! from whence ariseth this?
Are we turn'd Turks, and to ourselves do that
Which heaven hath forbid the Ottomites?
For Christian shame, put by this barbarous brawl!
He that stirs next to carve for his own rage
Holds his soul light; he dies upon his motion.—
Silence that dreadful bell! it frights the isle
From her propriety.—What is the matter, masters?—
Honest Iago, that looks dead with grieving,
Speak, who began this? on thy love, I charge thee.

Cassio's side but that his misconduct involved a serious danger and merited a most exemplary punishment.

160. *He dies.* The first quarto reads, ''Zounds, I bleed still, I am hurt to the death' while the second and third quartos add 'he faints' as a stage direction. The next two lines clearly show that the contest is proceeding and therefore there can be no fainting. *He dies* simply expresses Montano's determination to kill Cassio in revenge for the wound he had received from him. The meaning is—'He shall die,' 'I will kill him directly.' Cf. 'He dies upon his motion' in l. 160 & 'Villain, thou diest!' in V. i.

169. *Carve ... rage.* 'That is, supply food or gratification for his own anger.' (Steevens.) Cf. *Ham.* I. iii. 20: 'He may not, as unvalued persons do Carve for himself' (that is, indulge himself, do as he pleases).

170. *He dies ... motion.* 'The moment he stirs (to continue the contest), he shall die.'

172. *From her propriety.* 'Out of herself.' 'From her regular and proper state.'

173. *Looks.* An instance of *s* used for *st* in the second person singular of the verb, for the sake of euphony. Cf. IV. ii., 'every day thou *dafts* me'; V. ii., 'thou dost stone my heart, And *makes* me call, etc.'; *Ham.* I. iv. 53, 'That thou ... *Revisits* thus the glimpses'; *Lear,* IV. vi. 160, 'Thou hotly *lusts* to use her' (Furness).

Iago. I do not know: friends all but now, even now,
In quarter, and in terms like bride and groom
Devesting them for bed; and then, but now
(As if some planet had unwitted men)
Swords out, and tilting one at other's breast,
In opposition bloody. I cannot speak
Any beginning to this peevish odds;
And would in action glorious I had lost
Those legs that brought me to a part of it!
Oth. How comes it, Michael, you are thus forgot?
Cas. I pray you, pardon me; I cannot speak.
Oth. Worthy Montano, you were wont t' be civil;
The gravity and stillness of your youth
The world hath noted, and your name is great
In mouths of wisest censure: what 's the matter,
That you unlace your reputation thus,
And spend your rich opinion for the name
Of a night-brawler? give me answer to it.
Mon. Worthy Othello, I am hurt to danger:
Your officer, Iago, can inform you,—
While I spare speech, which something now offends me,—

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176. *In quarter.* In peace, or concord (Schmidt). Cf. *C. of E.* II. i. 108, 'Keep fair quarter with his bed'; and *K. John,* V. v. 20, 'Keep good quarter and good care to-night.'

177. *Devesting.* 'Undressing.'

181. *Peevish odds.* Silly quarrel.

184. *You are thus forgot,* i. e., by yourself. You have thus forgotten yourself and acted disgracefully.

187. *The gravity ... youth.* The serious and sedate disposition you possess, young as you are.

189. *Censure.* 'Judgment' Cf. IV. i., 'I may not breathe my censure.'

190. *Unlace.* 'Slacken or loosen. Put in danger of dropping' (Johnson).

191. *Spend ... opinion.* 'Throw away and squander a reputation so valuable as yours' (Johnson).

195. *Something.* Somewhat. *Offends* — Causes pain.

Of all that I do know; nor know I aught
By me that 's said or done amiss this night,
Unless self-charity be sometimes a vice,
And to defend ourselves it be a sin
When violence assails us.
Oth. Now, by heaven,
My blood begins my safer guides to rule;
And passion, having my best judgment collied,
Assays to lead the way. If I once stir,
Or do but lift this arm, the best of you
Shall sink in my rebuke. Give me to know
How this foul rout began, who set it on,
And he that is approv'd in this offence,
Though he had twinn'd with me, both at a birth,
Shall loose me.—What! in a town of war,
Yet wild, the people's hearts brimful of fear,
To manage private and domestic quarrel,
In night, and on the court and guard of safety!
'T is monstrous.—Iago, who began 't?
Mon. If partially affin'd, or 'league in office,
Thou dost deliver more or less than truth,
Thou art no soldier.

---

198. *Self-charity.* 'Care of one's self (Johnson).

201. *My blood ... rule.* 'My angry impulse begins to prevail over my steadier sense and judgment. (The Cowden-Clarkes).

202. *Collied.* 'Obscured; literally, blackened as with coal or smut.'

205. *Shall sink in my rebuke.* Will be utterly ruined by the terrible chastisement I shall inflict.

207. *Approved ... offence.* Proved to be the guilty party in this offence.

209. *Loose me.* 'Free me from the bond of twin brotherhood.'

Town of war. 'Town threatened with war and subject to martial law.'

211. *Manage.* 'Bring about,' 'set on foot.'

212. *The court and guard of safety.* 'The very spot and guarding-place of safety.' (The Cowden-Clarkes).

213. *Monstrous.* A trissyllable — pronounced *monsterous.*

214. *Partially affin'd.* 'Bound by partiality' (Staunton).

'League. Both the folio and the quarto have simply *league,* without the apostrophe, and most editors adopt Pope's emendation, *leagu'd.* I

Iago. Touch me not so near:
I had rather have this tongue cut from my mouth
Than it should do offence to Michael Cassio;
Yet, I persuade myself, to speak the truth
Shall nothing wrong him.—This it is, general.
Montano and myself being in speech,
There comes a fellow crying out for help,
And Cassio following him with determin'd sword,
To execute upon him. Sir, this gentleman
Steps in to Cassio, and entreats his pause;
Myself the crying fellow did pursue,
Lest by his clamour (as it so fell out)
The town might fall in fright; he, swift of foot,
Outran my purpose, and I return'd, the rather
For that I heard the clink and fall of swords,
And Cassio high in oath, which till to-night
I ne'er might say before. When I came back
(For this was brief) I found them close together,
At blow and thrust, even as again they were
When you yourself did part them.
More of this matter cannot I report:

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think Shakespeare wrote *'league* as an abbreviation of *colleague* and the folio abounds in instances where the apostrophe is omitted.

216. *Touch me not so near, etc.* Pray, do not appeal to my honour as a soldier, for I should rather be prepared to lose my power of speech than by speaking do injury to my friend, Michael Cassio. However, I will relate the whole truth of the present matter and I am sure there is nothing in it which can in any way affect him injuriously. [This preface in effect makes Othello believe that Iago does 'mince the matter' and 'make it light to Cassio.']

223-4. *With determined ... execute upon him.* With his sword uplifted, evidently determined to 'wreak his anger upon him.' (Schmidt).

229. *Outran my purpose.* Outran me and prevented me from effecting my purpose.

The rather—all the quicker.

231-32. *High in oath ... before.* Swearing loudly, which until to-night I never knew him to be guilty of.

234. *At blow and thrust.* 'In a mortal combat, striking and thrusting at each other.

But men are men; the best sometimes forget.
Though Cassio did some little wrong to him,
As men in rage strike those that wish them best,
Yet surely Cassio, I believe, receiv'd
From him that fled some strange indignity,
Which patience could not pass.
Oth. I know, Iago,
Thy honesty and love doth mince this matter,
Making it light to Cassio.—Cassio, I love thee;
But never more be officer of mine.—

Enter DESDEMONA, *attended.*

Look, if my gentle love be not rais'd up!—
I 'll make thee an example.
Des. What is the matter, dear?
Oth. All's well, sweeting;
Come away to bed.— Sir, for your hurts,
Myself will be your surgeon.— Lead him off.—
[*Montano is led off.*
Iago, look with care about the town,
And silence those whom this vile brawl distracted.—
Come, Desdemona; 't is the soldiers' life
To have their balmy slumbers wak'd with strife.
[*Exeunt all but Iago and Cassio.*

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238. *To him.* That is, Montano.

243. *Mince this matter.* Iago's thoroughly lying account of the incidents that occurred, with his art in seeming to 'mince the matter' and make 'it light to Cassio', while in fact contriving to give all possible heightening touches of his misdeed, is most skilfully managed in this speech. It will be remembered that far from *pursuing* Roderigo and *returning* to the scene of the conflict, Iago never stirs from the spot, but remains to direct the movements of his puppets, and prompt them in the parts which he has previously designed that they should perform; and that instead of Cassio's having been 'high in oath', he has given vent to nothing more offensive in speech than the threats, 'I'll beat the knave into a twiggen bottle' and 'I'll knock you o'er the mazzard' (The Cowden-Clarkes).

248. *Sweeting.* A term of endearment like '*honey*' in II. i. 205,—

Iago. What, are you hurt, lieutenant?

Cas. Ay, past all surgery.

Iago. Marry, heaven forbid!

Cas. Reputation, reputation, reputation! Oh, I have lost my reputation! I have lost the immortal part of myself, and what remains is bestial. My reputation, Iago, my reputation!

Iago. As I am an honest man, I thought you had received some bodily wound; there is more 'fence in that than in reputation. Reputation is an idle and most false imposition; oft got without merit, and lost without deserving: you have lost no reputation at all, unless you repute yourself such a loser. What, man! there are more ways to recover the general again: you are but now cast in his mood, a punishment more in policy than in malice; even so as one would beat his offenceless dog to affright an imperious lion. Sue to him again, and he 's yours.

---

from a sweet apple said to be still grown about Stratford.

256. *Past all surgery.* So badly that no surgeon can heal the wound. Iago understands or pretends to understand this literally.

263. *'fence.* Offence, pain. The quartos give the full word 'offence' while the folio has the contraction without the apostrophe and with f — the long *s* — misprinted for f. Most editors (including Knight) have mistaken the folio reading for '*sense*' and interpreted it to mean 'sensibility or feeling'; but '*offence*' undoubtedly gives the better sense.

264. *Idle.* Useless, worthless.

265. *Most false imposition.* Something *put upon* men, in most cases when they do not deserve it.

268. *Recover the general.* Regain his favour.

269. *Cast in his mood.* Thrown out (dismissed) in his angry mood. See I. i. 147.

271. *Affright.* Staunton suggests '*appease*' which Furness thinks 'accords better with the sense.' *Affright* is however the right word. Iago tells Cassio that Othello's dismissal of him was not the result of any real ill-will conceived against him or bad opinion formed, but mostly (and Iago, by the illustration of an *offenceless* dog, cunningly implies *soley*) the outcome of policy, being in effect meant as a *warning* to the big man concerned, against whom, on account of his "great fame in Cyprus and

Cas. I will rather sue to be despised than to deceive so good a commander with so slight, so drunken, and so indiscreet an officer. Drunk? and speak parrot? and squabble? swagger? swear? and discourse fustian with one's own shadow?—Oh, thou invisible spirit of wine, if thou hast no name to be known by, let us call thee devil!

Iago. What was he that you followed with your sword? What had he done to you?

Cas. I know not.

Iago. Is 't possible?

Cas. I remember a mass of things, but nothing distinctly; a quarrel, but nothing wherefore.—Oh, that men should put an enemy in their mouths to steal away their brains! that we should, with joy, pleasance, revel, and applause, transform ourselves into beasts!

Iago. Why, but you are now well enough; how came you thus recovered?

Cas. It hath pleased the devil drunkenness to give place to the devil wrath; one unperfectness shows me another, to make me frankly despise myself.

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great affinity", he did not like to express his displeasure directly. Iago insinuates that Othello was really angry with Montano, not with Cassio. The policy he alludes to is of course different from the policy referred to by Desdemona, in III. iii. 13.

274. *Slight.* 'Worthless', 'weak.' Cf. *Cymb.* V. iv. 64: 'Iachimo, slight thing of Italy.' The quarto reading is '*light.*'

275. *Speak parrot.* Talk whatever comes to the tip of the tongue, without knowing what you are saying.

276-7. *Discourse fustian ... shadow.* Talk boastingly and bombastically to an imaginary listener (as drunkards often do).

280. *What was he.* Who was he. See l. 331. So, in *Hen. V.* IV. iii. 18: 'What's he that wishes so?'

287. *Pleasance.* 'Pleasure' (the quarto reading); merriment.

292. *Wrath.* Cassio does not mean wrath 'at his own folly' as some have supposed, but at the man who found fault with him and presumed to teach him his duty, and at Montano who interfered with him.

Unperfectness. Imperfection.

Iago. Come, you are too severe a moraler. As the time, the place, and the condition of this country stands, I could heartily wish this had not befallen; but, since it is as it is, mend it for your own good. 297

Cas. I will ask him for my place again; he shall tell me I am a drunkard! Had I as many mouths as Hydra, such an answer would stop them all. To be now a sensible man, by and by a fool, and presently a beast! Oh, strange! Every inordinate cup is unblest, and the ingredient is a devil. 303

Iago. Come, come, good wine is a good familiar creature, if it be well used; exclaim no more against it. And, good lieutenant, I think you think I love you.

Cas. I have well approved it, sir.—I drunk! 307

Iago. You or any man living may be drunk at a time, man. I 'll tell you what you shall do. Our general's wife is now the general; I may say so in this respect, for that he hath devoted and given up himself to the contemplation, mark, and denotement of her

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294. *Moraler.* Moralizer.

302. *Inordinate.* Immoderate, taken in excess.

Unblest. Accursed. Cf. 'Unblest fate' in V. i.

303. *The ingredient is a devil.* The chief ingredient of it is not wine, but devil.

304. *Familiar creature.* Friendly creature, 'with a play on the word *familiar* in the sense of *devil.*' Iago admits that wine is a good kind of devil when well used.

307. *Approved.* Proved. Cf. l. 207.

308-9. *At a time.* 'Once and away.' *A* is sometimes used in the sense of *one*. Cf. *R.* & *J.* II. iv. 187: 'Doth not rosemary and Romeo begin both with a letter?' Also, *Ham.* V. ii. 232: 'these foils have all a length.'

310. *Is now the general.* 'Rules in everything.'

312. *Contemplation, mark, and denotement.* Study, appreciation (marking) and mental registration (noting down). The folio as well as the quarto reading is *deuotement* or *devotement,* evidently a misprint (for *denotement*) which arose from mistaking the *n* of the MS for *u*. The proximity of *deuoted* (devoted) probably led to this mistake. There can be no doubt that *denotement* is the correct word, as Shakespeare could not have written "devoted himself to the devotement," This misprint

parts and graces. Confess yourself freely to her; importune her help to put you in your place again. She is of so free, so kind, so apt, so blessed a disposition, she holds it a vice in her goodness not to do more than she is requested. This broken joint between you and her husband entreat her to splinter; and, my fortunes against any lay worth naming, this crack of your love shall grow stronger than it was before.

Cas. You advise me well.

Iago. I protest, in the sincerity of love and honest kindness.

Cas. I think it freely; and betimes in the morning I will beseech the virtuous Desdemona to undertake for me. I am desperate of my fortunes if they check me here.

Iago. You are in the right. Good night, lieutenant; I must to the watch.

Cas. Good night, honest Iago. [*Exit.*

Iago. And what 's he then that says I play the villain?
When this advice is free I give and honest,

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of *deuote* for 'denote' is of frequent occurrence in the quartos and the folios. Thus, the quarto gives 'But this *deuoted* a foregone conclusion' [III. iii.]. So, in *M. W.* IV. vi. 39, we have '*deuote* her to the doctor' and *Ham.* I. ii. 83, 'That can *deuote* me truly.'

313. *Parts.* 'Qualities.' Cf. I. iii. 253.

316. *Vice.* 'Defect', 'Fault.'

318. *Splinter.* 'Bind up with splints.'

319. *My fortunes ... worth naming.* I will stake my entire future prosperity against any wager, however small.

319-20. *This crack ... before.* This breach in Othello's love for you shall be so healed that he will be drawn more closely and attached more firmly to you than before. Cf. *2 Henry IV.*, IV. i. 222: 'Our peace will, like a broken limb, grow stronger from the breaking.'

324. *Freely.* Sincerely, truly.

325. *To undertake for me.* 'To plead my cause with Othello.'

326. *If they check me here.* If they hinder (go against) me here, i. e., if I cannot get Desdemona to plead my cause.

332. *Free.* This word has been variously interpreted. Many editors

Probal to thinking, and indeed the course
To win the Moor again? For 't is most easy
The inclining Desdemona to subdue
In any honest suit; she 's fram'd as fruitful
As the free elements. And then for her
To win the Moor—were 't to renounce his baptism,
All seals and symbols of redeemed sin,
His soul is so enfetter'd to her love,
That she may make, unmake, do what she list,
Even as her appetite shall play the god
With his weak function. How am I then a villain
To counsel Cassio to this parallel course,
Directly to his good? Divinity of hell!
When devils will the blackest sins put on,

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take it as equivalent to 'sincere', 'frankly given.' Rolfe interprets it as meaning 'innocent' or 'harmless.' The Cowden-Clarkes take it to mean 'liberal.' Henley understands it as meaning 'gratis', 'not paid for.' I think the real import of the word is, 'given without asking, of one's own accord.' Who can say that Iago is playing the villain when he has given Cassio such honest (sincere) advice and given it, too, *of his own accord*, and, as one must necessarily believe, out of pure love and friendship?

333. *Probal.* Apparently a contraction of *probable.* Collier quotes instances of similar contractions: *miseral* for *miserable* in Painter's *Palace of Pleasure; varial* for *variable* in Barnaby Rich's *Dialogue between Mercury and a Soldier.*

335. *Inclining.* 'Compliant.' Naturally ready to help others.

336-7. *Fruitful ... elements.* 'Liberal, bountiful, as the elements out of which all things are produced' (Johnson). Cf. *Henry VIII.* I. iii. 56: 'A hand as fruitful as the land that feeds us.' *The free elements*—Fire, air, earth and water which exist in abundance.

339. *Redeemed sin.* The redemption of sin.

342-3. *Even as her appetite ... function.* Just as her wishes may rule and direct his (power of) action which has lost its independence and is entirely subject to her control.

344. *Parallel.* 'That is, *level,* and even with his design' (Johnson). Calculated to secure the entire fulfilment of his purpose.

345. *Divinity of hell!* This phrase has been miserably misinterpreted. The real import is—Oh, the heavenly character that hell can assume! The divine appearance that a devil can put on!

346. *When devils ... put on.* 'When devils mean to instigate men to commit the most atrocious crimes' (Malone). This interpretation of

They do suggest at first with heavenly shows,
As I do now: for whiles this honest fool
Plies Desdemona to repair his fortunes,
And she for him pleads strongly to the Moor,
I 'll pour this pestilence into his ear,—
That she repeals him for her body's lust;
And by how much she strives to do him good,
She shall undo her credit with the Moor.
So will I turn her virtue into pitch,
And out of her own goodness make the net
That shall enmesh them all.—

Enter RODERIGO.

How now, Roderigo!

Rod. I do follow here in the chase, not like a hound that hunts, but one that fills up the cry. My money is almost spent; I have been to-night exceedingly well cudgelled; and I think the issue will be, I shall have so much experience for my pains, and so, with no

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'*put on*' has been accepted by almost all editors, but it is evidently wrong. The passage means — 'When devils wish to *assume* (and act) their most sinful character'; 'when devils resolve to do the blackest and most wicked deeds.' [Cf. II. i. 146, 239, 304.]

347. *Suggest.* Tempt, entice.

With heavenly shows. By putting on saintly appearances.

349. *Plies.* Importunes.

351. *Pestilence.* Poison.

352. *Repeals.* 'That is, recalls him' (Johnson). 'Strives to restore him to his place' (Rolfe). So, in *J. C.* III. i. 51: 'For the repealing of my banish'd brother.'

354. *Her credit with the Moor.* Othello's belief in her fidelity.

357. [ENTER RODERIGO] It must be noted here that an interval of five or six hours has elapsed since Iago bade good night to Cassio and proceeded to the watch [ll. 328-9]. Properly speaking, a new scene ought to be marked here, but both the folio and quarto editions continue the dialogue between Iago and Roderigo as part of Scene III., or rather of Scene II., for even the herald's proclamation is not made the subject of a separate scene. [See note on Scene III., p. 71.]

359. *Cry.* 'Pack.' Cf. *Cor.* III. iii. 120: 'You common cry of curs.'

money at all and a little more wit, return again to Venice. 364

Iago. How poor are they that have not patience!
What wound did ever heal but by degrees?
Thou know'st we work by wit and not by witchcraft,
And wit depends on dilatory time.
Does 't not go well? Cassio hath beaten thee,
And thou, by that small hurt, hast cashier'd Cassio.
Though other things grow fair against the sun, 371
Yet fruits that blossom first will first be ripe;

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363. *Wit.* Wisdom. Cf. l. 367.

365. *Patience.* A trissyllable. So, 'action' in l. 142.

367. *By wit ... ... witchcraft.* By means of intelligence, not by magic or supernatural help.

371-2. *Though other things ... first be ripe.* Most editors have misconstrued these lines. "Of many different things," says Johnson, "all planned with the same art and promoted with the same diligence, some must succeed sooner than others, by the order of nature. Everything cannot be done at once; we must proceed by the necessary gradation. We are not to *despair* of slow events, any *more* than of tardy fruits, while the causes are in regular progress and the fruits *grow fair against the sun.*" Hudson explains the passage as meaning, "though in the sunshine of good luck the other parts of our scheme are promising well, yet we must expect that the part which first meets with opportunity, or time of blossom, will soonest come to harvest, or catch success." The Cowden-Clarkes explain it as follows: "'Although our other plans are growing to maturity, yet the fruits of our scheme for the removal of Cassio, as it first bore promising blossom, will naturally first ripen.' Iago is trying to inspire Roderigo with patience for the ripening of his plan against Desdemona, by bidding him remember that meanwhile his plan against Cassio is succeeding." Malone says: "The *blossoming*, or fair appearance of things, to which Iago alludes, is the removal of Cassio. As their plan had already *blossomed*, so there was good ground for expecting that it would *soon* be *ripe.*" Deighton appears to be the only editor who has grasped the correct meaning of the passage. He says: "The argument is this: Iago compares Cassio to one tree, and himself and Roderigo to another or others. Cassio, he says, 'grew fair against the sun' whilst *they* were in the shade, *i.e.*, he had an advantage over them in his position in life; but, notwithstanding this, *they* had 'blossom'd first,' *i. e.*, had by their success in turning him out of his lieutenancy, made better use of their time and opportunities; and arguing from this, it was likely that they would 'first grow ripe,' *i. e.*, would ultimately beat him in the race

Content thyself awhile.—In troth, 't is morning;
Pleasure and action make the hours seem short.
Retire thee; go where thou art billeted.
Away, I say; thou shalt know more hereafter:
Nay, get thee gone.—[*Exit Roderigo.*] Two things
are to be done:

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by attaining their objects, while he would end in failure and disgrace." The passage would scarcely have presented any difficulty if editors had realised the mental condition of Roderigo and the full import of his complaint (ll. 358-64). These will be made clear in the Exposition. It is a mistake to suppose that there were several plans which were being promoted by Iago and Roderigo, of which one had succeeded and the others were in a fair way to success. There was only one scheme between them both, or rather one object in which Roderigo was interested and Iago was helping him to secure, viz., the love of Desdemona. Iago had told his dupe on the evening of their arrival at Cyprus that Desdemona was "directly in love" with Cassio, and when the poor fellow could not believe it, the cunning villain silenced him by a long lecture, and told him it was absolutely necessary for his success to remove the impediment that stood in his way—to "displant" the favourite and get rid of him—without which he said "there were no expectation of our prosperity." Reluctant as he was, Roderigo consented to follow his friend's advice and did provoke Cassio and bring about a scuffle during the night—only to find after a few hours of calm thought that he had made a fool of himself and followed "in the chase, not like a hound that hunts, but one that fills up the cry." So far, he had got nothing for his pains but a sound cudgelling while Iago stepped into the shoes of the lieutenant! It was clear that Iago had simply made a tool of him for his own purposes. In this state of mind, he goes to the good friend and gives vent to his complaint. Iago however pretends to think that Roderigo's discontent arose solely from his impatience and accordingly preaches to him the great virtue of patience and assures him that in spite of the advantageous position of Cassio (as the favourite of Desdemona who had her eye on him), their project was sure to succeed, as it had already "blossomed," and fruits from first blossoms were sure to ripen first. Iago tries his best to remove all suspicion from Roderigo's mind and restore his belief that the dismissal of Cassio (which he had managed to bring about by receiving but "a small hurt") was really a step towards the success of the project they had both set their hearts upon.

373. *In troth, 'tis morning.* The quarto reading is: '*By the mass,* 'tis morning.'

375. *Billeted.* Quartered. A 'billet' is a ticket assigning quarters to soldiers.

My wife must move for Cassio to her mistress;
I 'll set her on:
Myself awhile to draw the Moor apart,
And bring him jump when he may Cassio find
Soliciting his wife.—Ay, that 's the way:
Dull not device by coldness and delay. [*Exit.*

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380. *Awhile.* This is the reading of the first quarto. The folios and later quartos have *a while*, which editors alter into '*the* while'; but '*awhile*' seems to be the word written by Shakespeare. See l. 373 and IV. i. 'Stand you *awhile* apart.'

Apart. Aside (as in the line just quoted).

381. *Jump.* Precisely, exactly. Cf. *Ham.* I. i. 65: 'jump at this dead hour'; and *id.* V. ii. 386: 'jump upon this bloody question.'

ACT III.

SCENE I. *Before the Castle.*

Enter CASSIO *and some* Musicians.

Cas. Masters, play here; I will content your pains;
Something that 's brief; and bid good morrow, general. [*Music.*

Enter Clown.

Clown. Why, masters, have your instruments been in Naples, that they speak i' the nose thus?

1 *Mus.* How, sir, how!

Clown. Are these, I pray you, wind instruments?

1 *Mus.* Ay, marry, are they, sir.

Clown. Oh, thereby hangs a tale.

1 *Mus.* Whereby hangs a tale, sir?

Clown. Marry, sir, by many a wind instrument that I know. But, masters, here 's money for you; and the general so likes your music, that he desires you, for love's sake, to make no more noise with it.

1 *Mus.* Well, sir, we will not.

Clown. If you have any music that may not be heard, to 't again; but, as they say, to hear music the

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1. *Content.* 'Reward.' Cf. *Rich III.*, III. ii. 113: 'Come the next Sabbath, and I will content you.'

2. *Bid good morrow.* 'It was the custom for friends to serenade a new-married couple on the morning after their marriage, or bid them *good morrow* by a morning song.' See *R. & J.* III. v. 34. Rolfe quotes Milton, *L'All.* 45 (referring to the lark):

"Then to come, in spite of sorrow,
And at my window bid good morrow."

4. *Naples.* "The Neapolitans have a singularly drawling nasal twang in the utterance of their dialect; and Shylock talks of 'when the bagpipe sings i' the nose'" (The Cowden-Clarkes).

16-17. *To hear ... care.* Q. How do you reconcile this with Othello's appreciation of Desdemona's musical gifts: 'an admirable musician: oh,

general does not greatly care.

1 *Mus.* We have none such, sir.

Clown. Then put up your pipes in your bag, for I 'll away.—Go; vanish into air; away!

[*Exeunt Musicians.*

Cas. Dost thou hear, mine honest friend?

Clown. No, I hear not your honest friend; I hear you.

Cas. Prithee, keep up thy quillets. There 's a poor piece of gold for thee. If the gentlewoman that attends the general's wife be stirring, tell her there 's one Cassio entreats her a little favour of speech; wilt thou do this?

Clown. She is stirring, sir; if she will stir hither, I shall seem to notify unto her.

Cas. Do, good my friend. [*Exit* Clown.

Enter IAGO.

In happy time, Iago.

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she will sing the savageness out of a bear.' (IV. i.)

20. *For I'll away.* Because I 'll go away. These words which appear both in the folios and the quartos have puzzled many critics. Ritson considers them to be wrongly transcribed for '*fly away.*' Hanmer and Warburton substitute '*and hye away.*' I think the text, as it stands, is quite correct, and the meaning is clear when the context is carefully noted. The Clown tells the musicians, 'If you have any music that may not be heard (i. e., any soft strains which can be heard only here and not by the general who does not want to be disturbed), to't again (begin your music again) for *I* should like to listen to it, *not* the general who, they say, does not care very much for music.' 'We have none such, sir' replies the first musician. 'Then' says the Clown, 'put up your pipe in your bag, for I am going away.' He pauses a little and observing the musicians putting away their instruments, adds: 'Go; vanish into air; away!'

24. *Quillets.* 'Quibbles', 'subtleties.' See *Ham.* V. i. 94.

30. *Seem to notify unto her.* A colloquial periphrasis. Cf. *M. N. D.* III. i. 19: 'let the prologue seem to say'; *M. of V.* II. iv. 11: 'it shall seem to signify', etc. (Rolfe).

31. *In happy time.* In good time, opportunely. Fr. *à la bonne heure.* Cf. *R. & J.* III. v. 110; *Ham.* V. ii. 193.

Iago. You have not been a-bed, then?
Cas. Why, no; the day had broke
Before we parted. I have made bold, Iago,
To send in to your wife; my suit to her
Is, that she will to virtuous Desdemona
Procure me some access.
Iago. I 'll send her to you presently;
And I 'll devise a mean to draw the Moor
Out of the way, that your converse and business
May be more free.
Cas. I humbly thank you for 't.—[*Exit Iago.*] I never knew
A Florentine more kind and honest.

Enter EMILIA.

Emil. Good morrow, good lieutenant; I am sorry
For your displeasure, but all will soon be well.
The general and his wife are talking of it;
And she speaks for you stoutly: the Moor replies,
That he you hurt is of great fame in Cyprus
And great affinity, and that in wholesome wisdom
He might not but refuse you; but he protests he loves you,

33-4. *The day had broke ... parted.* Q. Was this true? If not, why does Cassio say so?

38. *Mean.* Often used by Shakespeare for 'means.' See *R. & J.* III. iii. 45, V. iii. 240, etc.

41. *Humbly.* This word here 'is no more to be taken in its literal sense than is *humble* now-a days when some very courteous correspondent signs himself, *your humble servant.*' (Furness).

42. *A Florentine.* Even a Florentine; even one of my own countrymen. Cassio was a Florentine (I. i. 19) and Iago was a Venetian (III. iii. 201-2 and V. i. 89-91).

44. *Your displeasure.* The displeasure you have incurred from Othello (Steevens). Cf. 'Your rich opinion' in II. iii. 191.

Soon. This is the quarto reading. The folio has 'sure' which is evidently a printer's blunder occasioned by the proximity of 'displea*sure*.'

48. *Great affinity.* High family connections.

And needs no other suitor but his likings
To take the safest occasion by the front
To bring you in again.
Cas. Yet, I beseech you,
If you think fit, or that it may be done,
Give me advantage of some brief discourse
With Desdemona 'lone.
Emil. Pray you, come in;
I will bestow you where you shall have time
To speak your bosom freely.
Cas. I am much bound to you.
[*Exeunt.*

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54. *Advantage.* Opportunity.

55. *Desdemona.* The folio has *Desdemon.* Knight enumerates five instances in which *Desdemon* is given in the folio instead of *Desdemona* and points out that the abbreviation was not a capricious one nor was it introduced merely for the sake of rhythm, but that it was clearly used to indicate 'familiar tenderness.' "In III. iii., 'Not now, sweet *Desdemon*, some other time', Othello playfully evades his wife's solicitation with a rarely-used term of endearment. In the next case, IV. ii., it comes out of the depth of conflicting love and jealousy—'Ah! *Desdemon*, away, away, away!' In the next place where he employs it, V. ii., it is used upon the last solemn occasion when he speaks to her, 'Have you prayed to-night, *Desdemon*?' And lastly, it is spoken by him when he has discovered the full extent of his guilt and misery, 'O *Desdemon!* dead *Desdemon*, dead.' The only other occasion on which it is employed is by her uncle Gratiano, — 'Poor *Desdemon!*' Surely, we have no warrant for rejecting such a marked peculiarity." The fact that the folio gives *Desdemon* in the present line as well has been cited by Furness and the Cowden-Clarkes as a fatal objection to Knight's theory, as there could be no thought of familiar tenderness from Cassio. The Cowden-Clarkes believe that in all the instances, *Desdemon* is a mere transcriber's or printer's error for *Desdemona.* I am rather inclined to think that it is so only in the present line, occasioned by the elision of *a* in *alone* and the absence of the apostrophe which is often omitted. 'With Desdemon alone' — the reading of the folio — is a likely misprint for 'With Desdemona lone' ['With Desdemona 'lone].

56. *Bestow you.* 'Conduct you to a place.'

SCENE II. *A Room in the Castle.*

Enter OTHELLO, IAGO, *and* Gentlemen.

Oth. These letters give, Iago, to the pilot;
And by him do my duties to the senate.
That done, I will be walking on the works, 3
Repair there to me.
Iago. Well, my good lord, I 'll do 't.
Oth. This fortification, gentlemen, shall we see 't?
Gent. We wait upon your lordship. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—The purpose of this short scene has not been perceived by any critic or commentator. Ulrici who admires the development of the plot in *Othello* and considers that the beauty of arrangement (of actions and situations) is exhibited in it *in the highest perfection, everything running on in a straight line, without digression, towards one goal,* says: "It is only the second scene of the Third Act that seems to be a makeshift, which might well be dispensed with. But to make up for this, the conclusion of the same Act, as well as of the Fourth and Fifth Acts, are the most masterly in composition." Would one be pardoned if one exclaimed, 'Oh, heavy ignorance!'? It is indeed surprising that the greatest scholars should have been cheated like very children by the simple art of Shakespeare—that three centuries of literary activity should have elapsed without one intellect grasping the beauty and subtlety of the art employed by the poet in the movement of time! The purpose of this short scene in the action of the tragedy as well as the efflux of time which has baffled the perception of every critic and scholar will be made quite clear in the Exposition. Suffice it to say here that it is wrong to suppose that the play has not reached us in its perfect form, or that Shakespeare cared only for stage-effect and did not mind discrepancies of time which would be discovered only by the critical reader, or that he employed any magic of the so-called 'double time.' This preposterous and meaningless theory, independently enunciated by two scholars—Wilson and Halpin—and accepted by Furness and others, will be found exploded in the last part of this work, entitled "The Double Time Delusion."

1. *These letters.* Q. What was the substance of these letters?

3. *Works.* Fortifications. See note on Act II. Scene I.

6. *We wait.* The quarto reading. The folio reading is '*We'll* wait.'

SCENE III. *Before the Castle.*

Enter DESDEMONA, CASSIO, *and* EMILIA.

Des. Be thou assur'd, good Cassio, I will do
All my abilities in thy behalf.
Emil. Good madam, do; I warrant it grieves my husband,
As if the cause were his.
Des. Oh, that 's an honest fellow.—Do not doubt, Cassio,
But I will have my lord and you again 6
As friendly as you were.
Cas. Bounteous madam,
Whatever shall become of Michael Cassio,
He 's never any thing but your true servant.
Des. I know 't; I thank you. You do love my lord:
You have known him long; and be you well assur'd
He shall in strangeness stand no further off 12
Than in a politic distance.
Cas. Ay, but, lady,
That policy may either last so long, 14
Or feed upon such nice and waterish diet,
Or breed itself so out of circumstances,
That, I being absent and my place supplied,
My general will forget my love and service.
Des. Do not doubt that; before Emilia here 19
I give thee warrant of thy place. Assure thee,

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12. *Strangeness.* 'Distant behaviour.'

13. *In a politic distance.* The distance which policy requires. See III. i. 46-9 *ante.*

14-15. *That policy ... circumstances.* That policy may be allowed to prevail so long, or continued on such slight and fanciful grounds, or its importance and necessity may be so magnified by force of circumstances.

19. *Doubt.* 'Imagine', 'fear.' Cf. *Ham.* I. ii. 256: 'I doubt some foul play.'

20. *I give thee warrant of thy place.* 'I promise you shall be restored.'

If I do vow a friendship, I 'll perform it
To the last article: my lord shall never rest;
I 'll watch him tame and talk him out of patience;
His bed shall seem a school, his board a shrift;
I 'll intermingle every thing he does
With Cassio's suit. Therefore be merry, Cassio;
For thy solicitor shall rather die
Than give thy cause away.

Emil. Madam, here comes my lord.

Cas. Madam, I 'll take my leave.

Des. Why, stay, and hear me speak.

Cas. Madam, not now; I am very ill at ease,
Unfit for mine own purposes.

Des. Well, do your discretion. [*Exit* Cassio.

Enter OTHELLO *and* IAGO.

Iago. Ha! I like not that.

Oth. What dost thou say?

Iago. Nothing, my lord: or if — I know not what.

Oth. Was not that Cassio parted from my wife?

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23. *I'll watch him tame.* 'Keep him awake till he grows tame.' — In allusion to the practice of taming hawks by keeping them awake. Steevens cites Cartwright, *Lady Errant*:

"we'll keep you,
As they do hawks, watching until you leave
Your wildness."

24. *A shrift.* Here used for 'a confessional.'

36. *Or if—I know not what.* These words (which commentators have not thought worthy of a note!) are a continuation of Iago's previous words, "Ha! I like not that," and must be uttered in the same undertone. Catching a glimpse of Cassio as he goes out, Iago, sincere friend that he is of Othello, exclaims (involuntarily, as it were)—"*Ha! I like not that!*" "What dost thou say?" asks Othello who overhears the exclamation. "Nothing, my lord!" says Iago, of course. But his mind is still bothered by what had caught his eye and he tries to think it might not have been Cassio he had seen! So he mutters to himself: "*Or if (it was not Cassio), I know not what* (he was that went out and looked so very much like him). The use of *what* for *who* is quite common in Shakespeare. See II. iii. 280, 331 and several instances in V. i.

Iago. Cassio, my lord! No, sure, I cannot think it,
That he would steal away so guilty-like,
Seeing you coming.
Oth. I do believe 't was he.
Des. How now, my lord!
I have been talking with a suitor here,
A man that languishes in your displeasure.
Oth. Who is 't you mean?
Des. Why, your lieutenant, Cassio. Good my lord,
If I have any grace or power to move you,
His present reconciliation take;
For if he be not one that truly loves you,
That errs in ignorance and not in cunning,
I have no judgment in an honest face.
I prithee, call him back.
Oth. Went he hence now?
Des. Ay, sooth; so humbled
That he hath left part of his grief with me,
To suffer with him. Good love, call him back.
Oth. Not now, sweet Desdemon; some other time.
Des. But shall 't be shortly?
Oth. The sooner, sweet, for you.
Des. Shall 't be to-night at supper?
Oth. No, not to-night.
Des. To-morrow dinner, then?
Oth. I shall not dine at home;
I meet the captains at the citadel.
Des. Why, then, to-morrow night, or Tuesday morn;
On Tuesday noon, or night; on Wednesday morn:

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47. *Reconciliation.* 'Submission,' 'act of conciliation.' 'Accept the submission which he makes in order to be reconciled (Johnson).

49. *In cunning.* Knowingly, deliberately.

50. *I have ... face.* I have no skill in judging by a man's countenance whether he is honest or not.

60. *To-morrow night, or Tuesday morn.* This fixes the time of the conversation as *Sunday morning*, before dinner. [See I. 280].

I prithee name the time, but let it not
Exceed three days. In faith, he 's penitent;
And yet his trespass, in our common reason—
Save that, they say, the wars must make examples
Out of her best — is not almost a fault
To incur a private check. When shall he come?
Tell me, Othello; I wonder in my soul,
What you would ask me that I should deny,
Or stand so mammering on. What! Michael Cassio,
That came a-wooing with you, and so many a time,
When I have spoke of you dispraisingly,
Hath ta'en your part,—to have so much to do
To bring him in! Trust me, I could do much—

Oth. Prithee, no more: let him come when he will;

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64. *In our common reason.* According to ordinary judgment. 'In our ordinary estimation.'

65-6. *The wars ... her best.* 'The severity of military discipline must not spare the *best men* of the army, when their punishment may afford a wholesome *example.*' (Johnson).

66. *Her best.* This is the reading both of folios and quartos. Editors generally change it into '*Their* best,' '*The* best' or '*Our* best,' but the change seems unnecessary. Shakespeare treats '*the wars,*' as equivalent to '*the war,*' and by personification '*her* best' would be quite correct.

Not almost a fault. Not quite fault enough; scarcely a fault.

67. *Check.* Rebuke. See I. i. 148.

70. *Mammering.* Hesitating.

71. *With you.* On your behalf. [See l. 100]. I should scarcely have thought this note necessary if it were not that one annotator makes Cassio a rival suitor of Othello!

72. *When I have spoke of you dispraisingly.* The Cowden-Clarkes mistake this for 'an enchanting womanly wile' and compare it with King Henry's words to Katherine *(Hen. V.* V. ii.), 'You'll question this gentlewoman about me; and I know, Kate, you will to her dispraise those parts in me that you love with your heart.' Several others have likewise fallen into this blunder of supposing that Desdemona spoke dispraisingly of Cassio "for the pleasure of having her ears filled with his praises by one who had known him long." The occasions on which Desdemona did speak "dispraisingly" of Othello will be pointed out in the Exposition, where it will be seen that the poet has thrown quite a veil over the incidents which preceded the secret marriage.

74. *Trust me, I could do much*—(for one who had less claim upon me.)

I will deny thee nothing.
Des. Why, this is not a boon;
'T is as I should entreat you wear your gloves,
Or feed on nourishing dishes, or keep you warm,
Or sue to you to do a peculiar profit
To your own person: nay, when I have a suit
Wherein I mean to touch your love indeed,
It shall be full of poise and difficult weight,
And fearful to be granted.
Oth. I will deny thee nothing;
Whereon, I do beseech thee, grant me this,
To leave me but a little to myself.
Des. Shall I deny you? no; farewell, my lord.
Oth. Farewell, my Desdemona; I 'll come to thee straight.
Des. Emilia, come.—Be as your fancies teach you;
Whate'er you be, I am obedient.
[*Exeunt Desdemona and Emilia.*
Oth. Excellent wretch! Perdition catch my soul,

76-83. Desdemona says all this to Othello in a playful, threatening tone, upbraiding him for the great hesitation with which he granted her present, simple request.

79-80. *Sue to you ... person.* Ask you to do something that was for your own good. *Peculiar.* 'Private,' 'one's own.' Cf. IV. i. 'beds which they dare swear peculiar.'

81. *Touch your love.* Test the genuineness and depth of your love for me.

82. *Full of poise and difficult weight.* Full of moment and involving serious consequences difficult to estimate. Knight says: 'It shall be one difficult to determine, and, when determined, hard to be undertaken.'

90. *Wretch.* Used here as a term of fondest endearment. Johnson says: "The meaning of the word 'wretch' is not generally understood. It is now, in some parts of England, a term of the softest and fondest tenderness. It expresses the utmost degree of amiableness, joined with an idea which, perhaps, all tenderness includes, of feebleness, softness and want of protection. Othello, considering Desdemona as excelling in beauty and virtue, soft and timorous by her sex, and by her situation absolutely in his power, calls her 'Excellent wretch!'" Cf. *R. & J.* I. iii. 44: 'The pretty wretch.'

But I do love thee! and when I love thee not,
Chaos is come again.
Iago. My noble lord,—
Oth. What dost thou say, Iago?
Iago. Did Michael Cassio, when you woo'd my lady,
Know of your love?
Oth. He did, from first to last; why dost thou ask?
Iago. But for a satisfaction of my thought;
No further harm.
Oth. Why of thy thought, Iago?
Iago. I did not think he had been acquainted with her.
Oth. Oh, yes; and went between us very oft.
Iago. Indeed!
Oth. Indeed! ay, indeed; discern'st thou aught in that?
Is he not honest?
Iago. Honest, my lord!
Oth. Honest! ay, honest.
Iago. My lord, for aught I know.
Oth. What dost thou think?
Iago. Think, my lord!
Oth. Think, my lord! Alas, thou echo'st me,
As if there were some monster in thy thought
Too hideous to be shown. Thou dost mean something:
I heard thee say even now, thou lik'st not that,

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91. *But I do.* If I do not.

92. *Chaos is come again.* That is, so far as Othello is concerned, the world will cease to exist, so that he might well say that chaos (which preceded the creation) was come again. 'When my love is for a moment suspended by suspicion, I have nothing in my mind but discord, tumult, perturbation, and confusion' (Johnson). Cf. *V. & A.* l. 1019:

"For he being dead, with him is beauty slain,
And, beauty dead, black Chaos comes again."

106. *Alas, thou echo'st me.* The quarto reading is 'By heaven, he echoes me, As if there were some monster in his thought.' As Knight remarks, there is, in the folio reading, 'a quiet expression of dread,—a solemn foreboding of evil.'

When Cassio left my wife: what didst not like?
And when I told thee he was of my counsel
In my whole course of wooing, thou criedst 'Indeed!'
And didst contract and purse thy brow together,
As if thou then hadst shut up in thy brain
Some horrible conceit. If thou dost love me,
Show me thy thought.

Iago. My lord, you know I love you.

Oth. I think thou dost;
And, for I know thou 'rt full of love and honesty,
And weigh'st thy words before thou giv'st them breath,
Therefore these stops of thine fright me the more;
For such things in a false disloyal knave
Are tricks of custom, but in a man that 's just
They 're close delations, working from the heart
That passion cannot rule.

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113. *Purse.* Contract; wrinkle.

115. *Conceit.* 'Conception', 'idea.'

120. *Stops.* Pauses; half-utterances.

123. *Delations.* The first folio has '*dilations*' and the first quarto '*denotements*' (indications). Johnson points out that *delations* (not 'dilations') is the word used by the poet and explains the passage as meaning '*secret accusations, working* involuntarily *from the heart,* which, though resolved to conceal the fault, cannot rule its *passion* of resentment.' Upton explains *dilations* as 'delayings', 'pauses' (L. *dilationes*) and Furness upholds this interpretation, saying: 'What has frightened Othello is these *stops,* these pauses of Iago, which he would have disregarded in a false knave, as a common trick, but in a man that's just, such *stops,* such *dilations* indicate something deeper, some horrible conceit which he hesitates to disclose, and which makes him weigh his words and protract the revelation.' This explanation is quite correct, but if the learned editor of the *New Variorum* compares it with lines 121-3, he will find that for '*they*' in l. 123, he has substituted 'such *stops,* such *dilations,*' and rendered '*are close dilations*' (the reading he upholds) by 'indicate something deeper, some horrible conceit which he hesitates to disclose, etc.'—which is nothing more nor less than Johnson fused in Furness! It makes no sense to say 'They (i. e., such things, those stops, those dilations) are close dilations' nor can *dilations* be appropriately spoken of as '*close* dilations' or as '*working* from the heart.' The words '*close*' and '*working*' clearly indicate that Johnson's interpreta-

Iago. For Michael Cassio,—
I dare be sworn, — I think that he is honest.
Oth. I think so too.
Iago. Men should be what they seem,
Or those that be not, would they might seem none!
Oth. Certain, men should be what they seem.
Iago. Why, then, I think Cassio 's an honest man.
Oth. Nay, yet there 's more in this.
I prithee, speak to me as to thy thinkings,
As thou dost ruminate, and give thy worst of thoughts
The worst of words.
Iago. Good my lord, pardon me;
Though I am bound to every act of duty,
I am not bound to that: all slaves are free.

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tion is the only one which can suit the context. '*Close delations ... rule*' means 'accusations kept close (concealed) within the heart, oozing out of it by force of passion (righteous indignation) which it cannot altogether suppress.'

127. *Would they might seem none.* That is, *no such.* Othello says 'I think so too,' (that Cassio is honest), and Iago cunningly qualifies it by adding: '(Yes, but) *men should be what they seem, or those that be not* (what they seem), *would they might seem none* [seem not like persons who are what they seem].' 'Either men should be what they seem, or when they are not what they seem, would that there were no concealing it.' Though Iago says this with special reference to Cassio's honesty, he makes a perfectly general statement, leaving Othello to apply it to the case in question. Editors have no warrant for importing the word '*honest*' after '*be not*' and running away into conjectures. Warburton says: 'There is no sense in this reading. I suppose Shakespeare wrote *knaves*'—for *none.* Johnson interprets it by ''Would they might no longer seem, or bear the shape of men.' Jennes renders the passage as follows: 'Those that seem honest should be honest, or those that be not what they seem, i. e., honest, would they might seem none, i. e., have no seeming or appearance of honesty.' The Cowden-Clarkes give the note — 'Would they might not seem honest men!'

131. *Thinkings.* Thoughts.

132-3. *Give thy worst ... words.* 'Speak plainly without mincing matters.'

135. *I am not bound ... free.* I am not bound to speak out my thoughts as I ruminate and give the worst of thoughts the worst of words; — even

Utter my thoughts? Why, say they are vile and false,—
As where 's that palace whereinto foul things
Sometimes intrude not? who has that breast so pure,
Where no uncleanly apprehensions
Keep leets and law-days, and in sessions sit
With meditations lawful?

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slaves are free *in such a matter*, i. e., are not bound by such a duty. Cf. *Cymb.* V. i. 7:

> "Every good servant does not all commands:
> No bond but to do just ones."

The quarto reading is: '*I am not bound to that all slaves are free to*' which Malone paraphrases — 'I am not bound to that which even slaves are not bound to do.' Editors generally adopt the quarto reading; but the folio version — with emphasis thrown on '*that*', followed by a pause before uttering the words 'all *slaves* are free' — is a decided improvement effected by the poet, which ought not to be ignored. The folio reading discloses *in the first instance*, and naturally, no more than Iago's simple feeling that he could not be bound to such an extraordinary duty as Othello wished to impose upon him, and *then*, a later suggestion, the reason and justification therefor. The ellipsis in the expression of thought after '*free*' adds to the naturalness. There is besides greater effect and cunning thrown into the words by breaking the sentence after '*that*' as in the folio reading, for then '*that*' refers itself with full force to lines 131-3 and signifies 'I am not bound to speak to you my thinkings as I ruminate and to give my worst of thoughts the worst of words.' Thereby, Iago not only indirectly admits the existence of the worst thoughts in his mind, but implies that a partial revelation may be within the acts of duty to which he is bound, displaying a readiness to give it out if pressed to do so. This effect becomes quite secondary— if indeed it is not altogether lost — in the quarto reading.

137-8. *As where's that palace ... not?* For there is no palace into which foul things do not sometimes intrude. Cf. *R. of L.* 853:

> "But no perfection is so absolute
> That some impurity doth not intrude."

138-141. *Who has a ... lawful?* Who has a breast so pure that no impure suspicions and surmises ever enter into it, 'keep court there for judging others, and sit side by side, as on a law bench', with lawful thoughts? "*Leets* and *law-days* are synonymous terms. ... They are explained (in Jacob's *Law Dict.*) to be courts or meetings of the *hundred*, 'to certify the King of the good manners, and government, of the inhabitants', and to enquire of all offences that are not capital" (Steevens). Cf. 30th *Sonnet*: 'When to the sessions of sweet silent thought.' (Malone),

Oth. Thou dost conspire against thy friend, Iago,
If thou but think'st him wrong'd and mak'st his ear
A stranger to thy thoughts.
Iago. I do beseech you,
Though I perchance am vicious in my guess,
(As, I confess, it is my nature's plague
To spy into abuses, and oft my jealousy
Shapes faults that are not) that your wisdom,

---

143. *If thou but think'st.* If you so much as *think.*

145. *Though I perchance,* etc. 'Though' in this line has been the subject of much needless commentary. The Cowden-Clarkes take it as equivalent to 'inasmuch as', 'since', and remark that 'the confused and imperfect construction in this speech is wonderfully managed, to give the effect of Iago's adoption of a hesitating, unwilling manner; half expressing, half suppressing his suggestions, and whetting his victim's anxiety to hear more by bidding him desire to hear no more.' Malone observes: 'The adversative particle *though* does not indeed appear very proper; but in an abrupt and studiously clouded sentence like the present, where more is meant to be conceived than meets the ear, strict propriety may well be dispensed with.' Steevens says: 'Iago seems desirous by his abruptness and ambiguity to inflame the jealousy of Othello, which he knew would be more effectually done in this manner than by any expression that bore a determinate meaning.' Theobald says: 'I own I cannot understand the reasoning of this passage.' Warburton conjectures '*Think*, I perchance, etc.', while Hanmer alters it into '*Cause* I perchance, etc.' Heath says: "*Vicious* does not signify here, *wrong* or *mistaken*, but, apt to put the worst construction upon everything. The sense then is, 'I beseech you, though I for my own part am perhaps apt to see everything in the worst light, which is a fault in my nature that carries its own punishment with it, yet let me intreat you that my imperfect conjectures, with the loose and uncertain observations on which they are founded, may not be the means of raising disquiet in the breast of a person whose wisdom is so much superior to mine.' The abrupt and broken character of the sentence was purposely intended, as it represents the artful perplexity of fraud and circumvention practising on the credulity of an open, honest heart." It is quite a relief to read Knight's remark: 'The modern editors enter into a long discussion about abruptness, and obscurity, and regulation of the pointing, without taking the slightest notice of the perfectly clear reading of the Folio, which we give without the alteration of a point or letter.' True, but this does not explain '*Though* I perchance, etc.' which has puzzled the commentators. The whole trouble arises from failing to connect the thought in Iago's words with that in Othello's immediately preceding them. When the connec-

From one that so imperfectly conceits,
Would take no notice, nor build yourself a trouble
Out of his scattering and unsure observance.
It were not for your quiet nor your good,
Nor for my manhood, honesty, or wisdom,
To let you know my thoughts.
Oth. What dost thou mean?
Iago. Good name in man and woman, dear my lord,
Is the immediate jewel of their souls.
Who steals my purse steals trash; 't is something, nothing;

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tion is perceived, it will become clear not only that *vicious* does not mean *wrong* or *mistaken*, but also that it does not refer to any feature of Iago's character that he is 'apt to put the worst construction upon every thing.' '*Though I perchance am vicious in my guess*' means 'though perhaps I have made a vicious guess, i. e., one which attributes vice to others.' The connexion of thought is as follows: Othello, suspecting that Iago was withholding from him information which, as a sincere friend, he ought to reveal, says—' If you so much as *think* that I am wronged, and keep your thought from me, you will be guilty of conspiring against your friend.' In other words, Othello entreats Iago, in the name of friendship, to reveal the very slightest suspicion he might entertain. Iago replies: '*Though I perchance am vicious in my guess*, i. e., though *perhaps* I do entertain a suspicion that you have been wronged, (and, I own, it is my nature's curse to pry into others' abuses and form suspicions, and *oftentimes* they prove wrong) it is not wise that you should take any notice of it from one whose fancies are so loose and uncertain as mine nor thereupon build for yourself an edifice of grief and misery.' [Iago knows of course that his '*perchance*' and '*oftentimes*' would in this context be interpreted by Othello as evasive modifications of '*certainly*' and '*sometimes*.'] To be brief. Othello says to Iago: ' If you so much as *think* I have been wrouged, do tell me so, in the name of friendship.' Iago replies: Grant that I do think you have been wronged (and I am such a cynical fool I always pry into abuses), still I beg you not to take any notice of my thought, for it is not wise that you should (by appealing to me as you have done) try to know it and make yourself miserable.'

149. *Conceits.* 'Conceives', 'imagines.'

151. *Scattering ... observance.* 'Random and uncertain observation.'

155-161. Q. Why does Iago dart off into this eulogium on 'Good name'?

155. *And woman.* To be isolated by a pause before and after, and uttered in an altered, clear, low tone. [*Gould's acct. of* J. B. Booth]

156. *Immediate.* Worn most closely; dearest and most precious.

'T was mine, 't is his, and has been slave to thousands;
But he that filches from me my good name
Robs me of that which not enriches him
And makes me poor indeed.

Oth. By heaven, I 'll know thy thoughts.

Iago. You cannot, if my heart were in your hand;
Nor shall not, whilst 't is in my custody.

Oth. Ha!

Iago. Oh, beware, my lord, of jealousy;
It is the green-ey'd monster which doth mock
The meat it feeds on. That cuckold lives in bliss
Who, certain of his fate, loves not his wronger;
But, oh, what damnèd minutes tells he o'er
Who dotes, yet doubts, suspects, yet fondly loves!

Oth. Oh, misery!

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160. *Not enriches.* Cf. Temp. II. i. 121: 'I not doubt;' *id.* V. i. 38: 'Whereof the ewe not bites.' (Abbott).

166-7. *It is the green-ey'd monster ... feeds on.* Pages of commentary have been written on this line-and-a-half, with the result that, apart from any difficulty presented by the passage, the variety and mass of interpretation, of which Furness gives a summary in five closely printed pages of the *New Variorum*, is alone sufficient to cloud the perception of the clearest intellect. I have hitherto thought that lawyers were the only class who enjoyed special facilities for having their common sense refined into a unique uncommon sense, but I now find that annotators run a very close race with them in this matter. It must have been pure inspiration which enabled certain scholars to discover the lion, the tiger and the more humble member of the feline tribe in the *green-ey'd monster* of the Bard of Avon. One has actually identified it with — the *mouse!* "But" he adds "its eyes are not to say *green;* however, a white mouse in Shakespeare's time would have been a very great curiosity, and if one had been produced with *green eyes*, it would have equally attracted the notice of the naturalist. Now, the mouse has a peculiar propensity, 'which doth *muck* the food it feeds on.' The mouse, after it has glutted on a piece of nice meat, leaves as much defilement on the residue as it possibly can; and thus treats that with indecency and contempt which it doted on until its hunger was perfectly appeased, &c. &c." Bravo, Zachary Jackson! But let us hear the other scholars. Grey thinks that *mock* ['mock] stands for *mammock.* Theobald, Hanmer, Johnson, Capel, Malone, Mason, Collier, Hudson, Keightley and other

[166. *It is the green-ey'd monster which doth mock*] editors read *make* for 'mock', and Furness says: 'The credit of this emendation (which Grant White asserts to be *the surest ever made in Shakespeare*, and therefore well worth contending for) has been, I believe, generally accorded to Hanmer down to the appearance of the invaluable Cambridge Edition, where for the first time it is rightly given as a conjecture of Theobald.' Accepting this emendation, Johnson remarks: 'When Iago bids Othello *beware of jealousy, the green-ey'd monster*, it is natural to tell why he should beware; and for caution he gives him two reasons, that jealousy *often* creates its own cause, and that, when the causes are real, jealousy is misery.' Hudson [reading 'make'] remarks: 'That is, jealousy is a self-generated passion; that its causes are subjective, or that it lives on what it imputes, not on what it finds. And so Emilia afterwards describes it.' On the other hand, many editors uphold 'mock' (which is both the folio and the quarto reading) though they do not agree in their explanations which vary according as they make the jealous man, or the woman on whom he dotes, or the circumstances which create and grow suspicion, the meat on which the green-eyed monster feeds. Warburton says: 'Mock, i. e., *loathe* that which nourishes and sustains it. This being a miserable state, Iago bids him beware of it. ... (From what follows — The cuckold lives in bliss, &c.) the villain is for fixing him jealous; and therefore bids him beware of jealousy, not that it was an *unreasonable*, but a *miserable* state, and this plunges him into it, as we see by his reply, which is only *Oh, misery!*' Heath says: '*Mock* certainly never signifies, to *loath*. Its common signification is to *disappoint*, in which sense I think it is used here. The proper and immediate destination of food is to satisfy hunger; when this end is not attained by the use of it, the food may be metaphorically said to be mocked or disappointed. So the end proposed by that suspicious inquisitiveness, which is the natural food of jealousy, is certainty and satisfaction some way or other. But this end it very rarely attains, and those very doubts and suspicions are perpetually *mocked*, and disappointed of that satisfaction they are in such eager pursuit of.' Jennes writes a rather funny note: "I am apt to think that Shakespeare had here the crocodile in his eye, who, by its tears, is said to deceive and entice its prey. To 'mock' is used by our Author to signify to *delude* and *deceive*. But if this be the allusion, what is the meat that Jealousy feeds on? And the context seems to show that Shakespeare makes *Love* the food of Jealousy. 'That cuckold lives in bliss who, certain of his fate, loves not his wronger'; he feels not the pang of Jealousy, because he wants that which nourishes and supports it, viz., Love. But how does Jealousy *mock* love? By pretending to be its friend, and by seeming to pity and condole with it, at the same time that it is its great enemy and destroyer." Steevens says: "If Shakespeare had written *a* green-ey'd monster, we might have supposed him to refer to some creature existing only in his particular imagination; but '*the* green-ey'd monster' seems to have reference to an

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object as familiar to his readers as to himself. It is known that the *tiger* kind have *green eyes,* and always play with the victim to their hunger before they devour it. ... Thus, a jealous husband, who discovers no certain cause why he may be divorced, continues to sport with the woman whom he suspects, and, on more certain evidence, determines to punish. There is no beast that can be literally said to *make* its own food, and therefore I am unwilling to receive Hanmer's emendation. ... The advice given by Iago amounts to this: Beware, my lord, of yielding to a passion which, as yet, has no proofs to justify its excess. Think how the interval between suspicion and certainty must be filled. Though you doubt her fidelity, you cannot yet refuse her your bed, or drive her from your heart; but, like the capricious savage, must continue to sport with one whom you wait for an opportunity to destroy. ... That jealousy is a *monster* which often *creates* the suspicions on which it feeds may be well admitted, according to Hanmer's proposition; but is it *the* monster? (i. e., a well-known and conspicuous animal,) and whence has it *green eyes? Yellow* is the colour which Shakespeare usually appropriates to jealousy. It must be acknowledged that he afterwards characterises it as 'a monster, Begot upon itself, born on itself.' But yet 'what damned minutes tells he o'er,' &c. is the best illustration of my attempt to explain the passage." M. Mason says: "It is so difficult, if not impossible, to extract any sense from the passage as it stands, even by the most forced construction of it, and the slight amendment proposed by Hanmer renders it so clear, elegant and poetical, that I am surprised the editors should hesitate in adopting it, and still more surprised that they should reject it. As for Steevens's objection that the difinite article is used, not the indefinite, he surely need not be told in the very last of these plays that Shakespeare did not regard such minute inaccuracies, which may be found in every play he wrote. When Steevens compares the jealous man, who continues to sport with the woman he suspects, and is determined to destroy, to the tiger who plays with the victim of his hunger, he forgets that the meat on which jealousy is supposed to feed is not the woman who is the object of it, but the several circumstances of suspicion which jealousy itself creates, and which cause and nourish it. So Emilia, in III. iv., 'They are not jealous ever for the cause, But jealous, for they are jealous; 'tis a monster *Begot upon itself, born on itself.*' This passage is a strong confirmation of Hanmer's reading." Malone says: "I have not the smallest doubt that Shakespeare wrote *make.* ... Mr. Steevens in his paraphrase on this passage, interprets the word *mock* by *sport;* but in what poet or prose-writer, from Chaucer and Mandeville to this day, does the verb *to mock* signify *to sport with?* Besides, is it true, as a general position, that jealousy (*as* jealousy) *sports* or *plays* with the object of love? ... It is *Love, not Jealousy,* that sports with the object of its passion; nor can those circumstances which create suspicion, and which are *the meat if feeds on,*

with any propriety be called the *food* of *Love*, when the poet has clearly pointed them out as the food or cause of *Jealousy;* giving it not only being, but nutriment. 'There is no beast,' it is urged 'that can *literally* be said to make its own food.' It is, indeed, acknowledged that jealousy is *a* monster which often *creates* the suspicions on which it feeds, but is it, we are asked, '*the* monster? (i. e., *a well-known and conspicuous animal,)* and whence has it *green eyes*? *Yellow* is the color which Shakespeare appropriates to jealousy.' To this I answer that *yellow* is not the only colour which Shakespeare appropriates to jealousy, for we have in *Mer. of Ven.* III. ii. 110, 'Shuddering fear, and *green-ey'd jealousy;*' and I suppose it will not be contended that he was *there* thinking of any of the tiger kind. If our poet had written only 'It is *the* green-ey'd monster; beware of it', the other objection would hold good, and some particular monster must have been meant; but the words, 'It is *the* green-ey'd monster, *which* doth,' &c., in my apprehension have precisely the same meaning as if the poet has written, 'It is *that* green-ey'd monster, which', or 'it is *a* green-ey'd monster.' When Othello says to Iago in a former passage, 'By heaven, he echoes me, as if there were some *monster* in his thought,' does any one imagine that any *animal* whatever was meant? The passage in a subsequent scene, to which Steevens has alluded, strongly supports the emendation which has been made: '*jealousy* ... 'tis a *monster, Begot upon itself, born on itself.*' It is, *strictly* speaking, as false that any monster can be *begot* or *born*, on itself, as it is that any monster can *make* its own food; but, poetically, both are equally true of that monster, jealousy." Knight says: "One of the difficulties would be got over by adopting the indefinite article, '*a* green-eye'd monster', of Q 2; this leaves us the license of imagining that Shakespeare had some *chimera* in his mind, to which he applied the epithet *green-ey'd*. We have no doubt that 'mock' is the true word; and that it may be explained, which doth play with, — half receive, half reject, — the meat it feeds on." The Cowden-Clarkes explain: "*Mock* bears the sense of 'disdain', 'spurn', tear wrathfully', even while feeding on. ... Jealousy, even while greedily devouring scraps of evidence, and stray tokens of supposed guilt, bitterly scorns them, and stands self-contemned for feeding on them." Hunter explains: "Jealousy mocks the person who surrenders his mind to her influence, deluding him perpetually with some new show of suspicion, sporting herself with his agonized feelings, just as the feline tribe sport with the prey which they have got into their power. The cat is *green-eyed*." Staunton says: "Strange that it should have occurred to no one that the meat the monster mocks (i. e., *scoffs, jibes*, or *ridicules)*, while he feeds on it, may be his credulous victim, — that thrice-wretched mortal, — 'who dotes, yet doubts; suspects, yet soundly loves.' The learned editor of the *New Variorum* says: "Both (Hunter and Staunton) give what seems to me to be emphatically the true explanation, and one which occurred to me

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before I had read theirs. ... The meat that jealousy feeds on is the victim of jealousy, the jealous man, who is mocked with trifles light as air. Substitute *mind* for *meat*, and is not the meaning clear? Is it the mark of a monster to *make* his food? Then are cooks monsters, — and they sometimes are." Martinus Scriblerus, at any rate, makes an original suggestion. He asks: "What if the poet meant to say that the meat mocked the monster, instead of the monster mocking the meat? This is an inverted construction, to be sure, but it is admissible and gives a very good meaning. Jealousy is certainly a monster which the meat it feeds on doth mock, that meat consisting of surmises and 'trifles light as air.' 'It is the green-ey'd monster which doth mock — The meat it feeds on!'" After reading through all this mass of commentary, who can believe that truth lies in a nutshell? But it does, though it has mocked the search of so many learned scholars. In the passage under consideration, 'mock' signifies '*imitate*', '*counterfeit*;' [as in *W. T.* V. iii. 19: 'To see the life as lively mock'd, as ever Still sleep mock'd death;' and 3 *Hen. VI.* III. iii: 'For mocking marriage with a dame of France.'] Jealousy, we are told elsewhere, [III. iv.] is a *monster, begot upon itself, born on itself* — an abnormal creature whose abnormity lies in the very fact of its being begotten on itself and born on itself (which can be said of no living creature in the world). In the present line, the poet tells us that jelaousy is *the green-ey'd monster which doth mock the meat it feeds on* — the abnormal creature with green eyes, whose abnormity is in the fact that, in consequence of its discoloured and deluded vision, it mocks the food it feeds on, i. e., can counterfeit (make a false creation of) the food it needs, and feed upon it! It is such a singular monster that it does not need any real food to sustain it but can live and thrive upon the *mock* (i. e., counterfeit, unreal, imaginary) food it can create for itself by virtue of its green eyes. [Jealousy is represented as *green-eyed* as it is in fact a sickness of the mind. Sick people often see things tinged with green or yellow. So also, 'a yellow and green melancholy' in *T. N.* II. iv. 116.] Cf. Massinger, *The Picture*, I. i. (quoted by Mason):

"But why should I nourish
A fury here, and with *imagin'd food*,
Holding no real ground on which to raise
A building of suspicion she was ever
Or can be false?"

Iago warns Othello: "Beware, my lord, of jealousy. It is that singularly abnormal feeling which looks at things in a false light and oftentimes imagines and invents suspicions which nourish and develop it." And, as it were to emphasise and illustrate the wisdom of his advice, he adds: "That cuckold lives in bliss Who, certain of his fate, loves not his wronger; But, oh, what damned minutes tells he o'er Who dotes, yet doubts, suspects, yet strongly loves!"—the man who knows for certain that his wife

Iago. Poor and content is rich, and rich enough;
But riches fineless is as poor as winter
To him that ever fears he shall be poor.
Good heaven, the souls of all my tribe defend
From jealousy!
Oth. Why, why is this?
Think'st thou I 'd make a life of jealousy,
To follow still the changes of the moon
With fresh suspicions? No; to be once in doubt
Is once to be resolv'd: exchange me for a goat,
When I shall turn the business of my soul
To such exsufflicate and blow'd surmises,
Matching thy inference. 'T is not to make me jealous

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has been false to him is a happy man compared with him who becomes the miserable plaything of jealousy. Iago pretends to say all this of course as a sincere friend who wishes to save Othello's mind from the unenviable misery which such a self-growing feeling as jealousy must necessarily occasion, but he knows that his words convey a clear hint to the general that he has become a cuckold and had better know the truth and be done with all suspicion and jealousy.

173. *Fineless.* 'Infinite', 'without limit', 'unbounded.'

Winter. 'Finely expressed; winter producing no fruits' (Warburton).

180. *Once to be resolved.* To investigate immediately and once for all come to a definite resolution (conclusion) about its truth or untruth. 'The gist of Othello's speech is that, if once he doubts, he will make that first occasion settle the whole question for ever, by having the doubt turned into a certainty, one way or the other. The relation between *doubting* and *being resolved* is repeated in lines 190, 191: *I'll see before I doubt*, &c.' (Furness).

Exchange ... goat. Take me for a mere sensual beast. See l. 403.

182. *To such ... surmises.* Refers to *fresh suspicions* (l. 179).

Exsufflicate. [L. *sufflatus*]. Puffed out; exaggerated; empty and frivolous. This word is explained by the word *blow'd* which follows it.

183. *Matching thy inference.* Tallying with and supporting your guess (which I wish you to let me know). Johnson says: 'The allusion is to a bubble. Do not think, says the Moor, that I shall change the noble designs that now employ my thoughts, to suspicions which, like bubbles *blown* into a wide extent, have only an empty show without solidity; or that, in consequence of such empty fears, I will close with thy inference against the virtue of my wife.'

'Tis not ... jealous. It will not make me jealous.

To say my wife is fair, feeds well, loves company,
Is free of speech, sings, plays, and dances well;
Where virtue is, these are more virtuous:
Nor from mine own weak merits will I draw
The smallest fear or doubt of her revolt;
For she had eyes, and chose me. No, Iago!
I 'll see before I doubt; when I doubt, prove:
And on the proof there is no more but this,
Away at once with love or jealousy!

Iago. I am glad of this; for now I shall have reason
To show the love and duty that I bear you
With franker spirit; therefore, as I am bound,
Receive it from me. I speak not yet of proof.
Look to your wife; observe her well with Cassio;
Wear your eyes thus, not jealous nor secure:
I would not have your free and noble nature
Out of self-bounty be abus'd; look to 't.
I know our country disposition well:
In Venice they do let heaven see the pranks
They dare not show their husbands; their best conscience
Is not to leave 't undone, but keep 't unknown.

Oth. Dost thou say so?

Iago. She did deceive her father, marrying you;
And when she seem'd to shake and fear your looks,
She lov'd them most.

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186. *Where virtue ... more virtuous.* These, in a virtuous woman, are praiseworthy graces which set off her virtue.

188. *Doubt.* 'apprehension', 'suspicion.' So, in l. 429.

Revolt. 'Faithlessness', 'inconstancy.'

191. *This.* Similarly, in l. 84 *ante*.

198. *Thus.* — with a side-glance, so as to watch her without her knowing it.

199. *Free.* Unsuspecting.

200. *Self-bounty.* 'Inherent generosity'; innate good nature.

203. *Their best conscience.* The highest moral standard fixed by their conscience.

Oth. And so she did.
Iago. Why, go to, then;
She that, so young, could give out such a seeming
To seel her father's eyes up close as oak—
He thought 't was witchcraft!—but I am much to blame;
I humbly do beseech you of your pardon
For too much loving you.
Oth. I am bound to thee for ever.
Iago. I see this hath a little dash'd your spirits.
Oth. Not a jot, not a jot.
Iago. I' faith, I fear it has.
I hope you will consider what is spoke
Comes from my love. But I do see y 'are mov'd:
I am to pray you not to strain my speech
To grosser issues nor to larger reach
Than to suspicion.
Oth. I will not.
Iago. Should you do so, my lord,
My speech should fall into such vile success

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209. *Give out.* 'Exhibit', 'display.'

210. *Seal.* Fasten. See note on I. iii. 269.

Close as oak. "This simile is used by a poetical license for 'close as the grain of oak;' that wood being notoriously close-grained." (The Cowden-Clarkes). Staunton and others conjecture *hawk* for 'oak.'

212. *Beseech you of your pardon.* A peculiar construction. Cf. *M. N. D.* III. i. 185: 'I shall desire you of more acquaintance.' *M. of V.* IV. i. 402: 'I humbly do desire your grace of pardon.'

217. *Y 'are moved.* Furness very rightly points out that both in this line and in 224, the contraction *y 'are* (which is found in the folio) should be used in preference to the usual *you're*, or even to the *you are* of the quartos.

218. *I am to pray.* It is (now) my duty to pray.

Strain. Stretch, extend.

219. *Grosser issues.* Larger conclusions.

Reach. Result, practical action.

222. *Shall fall into.* Would (inevitably) result in.

Success. Here used in its literal sense of 'that which succeeds or follows,' whether good or bad — consequence. Cf. 'bad success' in 3 *Hen. VI.* II. ii. 46 and *Tr. & Cr.* II. ii. 117.

As my thoughts aim not at. Cassio 's my worthy friend—
My lord, I see y' are mov'd.
Oth. No, not much mov'd;
I do not think but Desdemona 's honest.
Iago. Long live she so! and long live you to think so!
Oth. And yet, how nature erring from itself,— 227
Iago. Ay, there 's the point; as—to be bold with you—
Not to affect many proposèd matches
Of her own clime, complexion, and degree,
Whereto we see in all things nature tends— 231
Foh! one may smell in such, a will most rank,
Foul disproportion, thoughts unnatural.

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227. *Erring.* 'Straying', 'wandering.' See 'an erring barbarian' I. iii. 354; and cf. I. iii. 62, 100.

228. *To be bold with you.* 'If I may without offence speak plainly.'

229. *Affect.* Care for, be inclined to.

231. *Whereto ... tends.* 'To which similarity we see that nature in everything inclines; not mankind only, but the animal creation, &c.' (Deighton).

232. *A will most rank.* 'That is, wilfulness. A *rank will* is self-will over-grown and exuberant' (Johnson). This interpretation is generally discarded by commentators, who take '*will*' as meaning 'desire' or 'appetite.' Schmidt explains 'rank' as 'morbid' and Singer says: 'A *rank will* is a *lustful inclination.*' Ritson disagrees with Dr. Johnson and says: 'To *smell* wilfulness and an overgrown self-will is a faculty peculiar to the learned critic. But with all imaginable deference to him, the expression means, inclinations or desires most foul, gross, and strong-scented.' One is tempted to ask if Ritson could boast of the faculty of *smelling* 'foul disproportion' and 'thoughts unnatural.' But unfortunately for him and others who seem to be troubled about the organ of smell, Johnson's *must* be pronounced to be the correct interpretation. Iago is trying to throw dirt on Desdemona's character and would not dare do it all at once, but only slowly and by degrees. As soon as Othello begins to feel puzzled as to why Desdemona, wandering from the natural course, had chosen him for her husband, Iago catches the point at once, and with an apolegetic parenthesis, makes capital out of it, inferring from such a conduct *a will most rank* — an extravagant wilfulness — to begin with. Observing that this inference is not repelled by Othello, he suggests something worse, *foul disproportion* — an ugly want of

But — pardon me — I do not in position
Distinctly speak of her, though I may fear
Her will, recoiling to her better judgment,
May fall to match you with her country forms
And happily repent.
Oth. Farewell, farewell :
If more thou dost perceive, let me know more ;
Set on thy wife to observe : leave me, Iago.
Iago. [*Going*] My lord, I take my leave.
Oth. Why did I marry? This honest creature doubtless
Sees and knows more, much more, than he unfolds.
Iago. [*Returning*] My lord, I would I might entreat your honour
To scan this thing no further ; leave it to time.
Although 'tis fit that Cassio have his place,
For, sure, he fills it up with great ability,
Yet, if you please to hold him off awhile,
You shall by that perceive him and his means.

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symmetry between the tender maiden and her obstinate and extravagant self-will. Then he goes a step further and ventures the vile suggestion, *thoughts unnatural.* Othello repels this however with an indignant look ; so the villain turns round at once and saves himself by saying that his assertion was a general one, not meant specially against Desdemona who may be quite pure in her thoughts, *though* (and Iago is always careful to qualify and re-qualify his statements and suggestions) he might justly suspect that *her will* — her self-will which made her choose the Moor for her husband — reverting to and obeying her better judgment had begun to compare him with her own countrymen and perhaps to repent of her choice.

234. *In position.* In this assertion.

235. *Distinctly.* Particularly.

237. *Fall to.* "Come to, begin. Cf. *Ham.* V. ii. 216 : 'before you fall to play,' etc." (Rolfe).

238. *Happily.* For 'haply.' Shakespeare often uses 'happily' for 'haply', especially when it suits the metre. See *Ham.* I. i. 133 : 'If thou art privy to thy country's fate, Which, happily, foreknowing may avoid ; *M. for M.* IV. ii. *Duke.* 'You shall hear more ere morning.' *Prov*, 'Happily.'

Note if your lady strain his entertainment
With any strong or vehement importunity;
Much will be seen in that. In the mean time,
Let me be thought too busy in my fears—
As worthy cause I have to fear I am—
And hold her free, I do beseech your honour.
Oth. Fear not my government.
Iago. I once more take my leave. *Exit.*
Oth. This fellow's of exceeding honesty,
And knows all qualities, with a learned spirit
Of human dealings. If I do prove her haggard,
Though that her jesses were my dear heart-strings,
I 'd whistle her off and let her down the wind,
To prey at fortune. Haply, for I am black,
And have not those soft parts of conversation
That chamberers have, or for I am declin'd
Into the vale of years,—yet that's not much—

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250. *Strain his entertainment.* 'Urge his reinstatement,' 'press hard his re-admission to his pay and office.' *Entertainment*—a military term meaning 'service.' See *Cor.* IV. iii. 49; *A. W.* III. vi. 13.

255. *Free.* Free from guilt, innocent.

256. *My government.* My power of self-control, 'my ability to contain my passion.' Cf. 1 *Hen. IV.* III. i. 184: 'Defect of manners, want of government.'

259-60. *With a learned ... dealings.* With a spirit learned of (in) human dealings. This construction, which Walker hesitatingly suggested, is preferable to the other construction—all qualities of human dealings.

260. *Haggard.* Wild or intractable; disposed to break away from duty. A *haggard* is a wild, untrained hawk.

261. *Jesses.* 'Leathern or silken straps attached to the foot of the hawk, by which the falconer held her.'

262. *Down the wind.* 'The falconers always let fly the hawk against the wind; if she flies with the wind behind her, she seldom returns. If, therefore, a hawk was for any reason to be dissmissed, she was *let down the wind*, and from that time shifted for herself and *preyed at fortune.*' (Johnson). The falconer whistles when he casts off the hawk or lets her fly.

264. *Soft parts.* Enticing gifts.

Conversation. Behaviour, deportment.

265. *Chamberers.* 'Hunters of ladies' drawing rooms;' gallants,

She 's gone. I am abus'd ; and my relief
Must be to loathe her. Oh, curse of marriage,
That we can call these delicate creatures ours,
And not their appetites ! I had rather be a toad,
And live upon the vapour of a dungeon,
Than keep a corner in the thing I love
For others' uses. Yet, 't is the plague of great ones ;
Prerogativ'd are they less than the base ;
'T is destiny unshunnable, like death :
Even then this forkèd plague is fated to us
When we do quicken.—Look where she comes.

Enter DESDEMONA *and* EMILIA.

If she be false, heaven mock'd itself !—
I 'll not believe 't.

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267. *Abused.* Dishonoured.

270. *Appetites.* Desires, passions.

271. *Live upon the vapour.* Feed upon the foul air.

274. *Prerogativ'd.* Exempt, by way of privilege (from the curse of an unfaithful wife). Cf. *A. Y. L.* III. iii. 58:

276-7. *Even then ... quicken.* Even from the very first moment when we begin to quicken in the mother's womb, we are fated to be cuckolded.

Forked plague. The curse of being cuckolded. The reference is to the horns which (according to the old belief) were supposed to grow on the forehead of a cuckold.

278. *If she be false, heaven mocked itself.* This is the folio reading. The quarto reading is 'If she be false, *oh, then heaven mocks itself*' which Malone explains by 'renders its own labours fruitless, by forming so beautiful a creature as Desdemona, and suffering the elegance of her person to be disgraced and sullied by the impurity of her mind' and he thinks it may also mean 'heaven itself cheats us with unreal mockery.' Steevens explains: 'If she be false, heaven disgraces itself by creating woman after its own image. To have made the resemblance perfect, she should have been good as well as beautiful. Knight says: 'By the reading of the Folio we may understand that, if Desdemona be false,—be not what she appears to be,—heaven, at her creation, instead of giving an image of itself, mocked itself—gave a false image. The reading of the quartos is more forcible and natural.' Knight is right in his interpretation of the folio reading but I do not endorse his preference of the quarto reading. I am sure that both in the quarto and the folio reading, Shakespeare uses the word *mock* in the sense of *counterfeit*. [See note

Des. How now, my dear Othello!
Your dinner, and the generous islanders
By you invited, do attend your presence.
Oth. I am to blame.
Des. Why do you speak so faintly?
Are you not well?
Oth. I have a pain upon my forehead, here.
Des. Faith, that's with watching ;-'t will away again:
Let me but bind it hard, within this hour
It will be well.
Oth. Your napkin is too little; [*He pushes the handkerchief aside; Desdemona lets it fall.*
Let it alone. Come, I 'll go in with you.

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on l. 166 p. 117.] The change of *mocks* (gives a counterfeit image of) — the quarto reading—into *mocked* in the folio removes all doubt in the matter. The idea is not that heaven itself *deceives or cheats us*, nor that heaven *disgraces or ridicules itself* by creating a bad woman in its beautiful image, but that heaven *counterfeited* its own image when it created Desdemona, i. e., that it *created a fraudulent imitation of itself* in the person of Desdemona — which is a difficult thing to believe. Desdemona's exterior is a perfect picture of heaven and if her character were not heavenly, she would be a *mere outward imitation* of heaven; which leads to the conclusion that *heaven mocked itself*, i. e., created a *counterfeit picture* of itself!— a most serious charge which Othello cannot believe against heaven. The omission of *oh, then* in the folio indicates a pause at the end of the line, before Othello expresses his disbelief — '*I'll not believe it.*'

280. *Generous islanders.* The islanders of rank and distinction. So, in *M. for M.* IV. vi. 13: 'The generous and gravest citizens.' (Steevens).

281. *Attend.* Await. Cf. *M. W.* I. i. 279: 'The dinner attends you, sir.'

284. *Upon my forehead.* Rymer and Delius suppose that Othello covertly alludes to the forked plague when he talks of the pain *upon* his forehead. If the supposition be correct — as Furness thinks it is — then Desdemona's tender response proves her 'unconscious innocence.'

285. *That's with watching.* Annotators suppose — and they cannot do anything better with their vision shut off by a veil — that these words refer to the disturbance of Othello's sleep by the brawl which resulted in Cassio's dismissal. The truth will be seen from the Exposition which removes the veil.

287. *Napkin.* An old word for 'handkerchief,' still used in that sense in Scotland and in the north of England. (Warner).

Des. I am very sorry that you are not well.
Exeunt Othello and Desdemona.

Emil. I am glad I have found this napkin.
This was her first remembrance from the Moor:
My wayward husband hath a hundred times
Woo'd me to steal it; but she so loves the token,
For he conjur'd her she should ever keep it,
That she reserves it evermore about her
To kiss and talk to. I 'll have the work ta'en out,

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291. *Remembrance.* 'That is, *memorial,* or *forget-me-not* (Staunton). Love-gift.

292. *Wayward.* 'Capricious,' 'full of obstinate fancies.'

A hundred times. Rolfe remarks: "This is apparently inconsistent with the brief time that has elapsed since the beginning of the drama; but it is really an illustration of what Furness (*Hamlet,* vol. i. p. xv.) calls the poet's 'two series of times, the one suggestive and illusory, and the other visible and explicitly indicated.' Halpin calls them the *protractive* series and the *accelerating* series; and Christopher North describes them as Shakespeare's 'two clocks.'" The Cowden-Clarkes remark: "The expression 'a hundred times' is here introduced to give the effect of a considerable period having elapsed. In hardly any play is our dramatist's system of simultaneously indicated long time and short time more visibly and skilfully sustained than in this one of Othello. He had to give the brief effect of recent marriage, consequent upon the elopement and secret espousals which occur in the opening of the play; and he had also to give the lengthened effect of conjugal union, in order to add to the tragic impression of broken wedded faith and destroyed wedded happiness. To produce the former effect, he has made but one night elapse since the arrival of the married pair in Cyprus and the celebration of their nuptials; to produce the latter effect, he throws in occasional touches that indicate a prolonged period. The present is one of these; and we shall point out others as they occur." And the learned editors have not only filled their annotations with these indications of long and short time, but actually published a whole collection of them from all plays, extending over 179 pages of small type, in their *Shakespeare Key.* Oh, what mighty waste of laborious search! and how badly this hallucination of Double Time — which had its origin especially in *Othello* — has hidden the real beauties of the poet's unique art even in other plays! The reader must forgive the suspense which is forced upon him until he goes through the Exposition of this play and the exposure of the Double Time Theory which follows it.

296. *Taken out.* Copied. So, in III. iv., 'Take me this work out'; and IV. i. 'I must take out the work?'.

And give 't Iago : what he will do with it
Heaven knows, not I ;
I nothing, but to please his fantasy. 299

Enter IAGO.

Iago. How now ! what do you here alone ?
Emil. Do not you chide ; I have a thing for you.
Iago. You have a thing for me ! 302
It is a common thing—
Emil. Ha !
Iago. To have a foolish wife.
Emil. Oh, is that all ? What will you give me now
For that same handkerchief ?
Iago. What handkerchief ?
Emil. What handkerchief !
Why, that the Moor first gave to Desdemona ;
That which so often you did bid me steal.
Iago. Hast stol'n it from her ? 310
Emil. No ; but she let it drop by negligence,
And, to the advantage, I, being here, took 't up.
Look, here it is.
Iago. A good wench ; give it me. 313
Emil. What will you do with 't, that you have been so earnest
To have me filch it ?
Iago. [*Snatching it*] Why, what 's that to you ?
Emil. If it be not for some purpose of import,
Give 't me again ; poor lady, she 'll run mad
When she shall lack it. 318
Iago. Be not acknown on 't ; I have use for it.

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299. *Fantasy.* 'Fancy', 'whim.'

312. *To the advantage.* 'Opportunely' (Johnson).

318. *Lack.* Miss.

319. *Be not acknown on 't.* Pretend to know nothing about it. Do not acknowledge anything concerning it. 'Do not confess to the knowledge of it' (Schmidt). Steevens quotes from Puttenham's *Arte of Poesie* ;

Go, leave me. [*Exit Emilia.*
I will in Cassio's lodging lose this napkin,
And let him find it. Trifles light as air
Are to the jealous confirmations strong
As proofs of holy writ; this may do something.
The Moor already changes with my poison;
Dangerous conceits are in their natures poisons,
Which at the first are scarce found to distaste,
But with a little act upon the blood
Burn like the mines of sulphur.—I did say so.
Look, where he comes!

Enter OTHELLO.

Not poppy, nor mandragora,
Nor all the drowsy syrups of the world,
Shall ever medicine thee to that sweet sleep
Which thou ow'dst yesterday.

Oth. Ha! ha! false to me?

Iago. Why, how now, general! no more of that.

Oth. Avaunt! be gone! thou hast set me on the rack.
I swear 't is better to be much abus'd
Than but to know 't a little.

'so would I not haue a translatour to be ashamed to be acknowen of his translation.' So again in *The Life of Ariosto*, subjoined to Harrington's translation of the "Orlando Furioso" (1607): 'Some say he was married to her privilie, but durst not be *acknowne* of it.'

326. *Conceits.* Conceptions. See l. 115.

327. *To distaste.* 'To be distateful or unsavoury.'

328. *Act.* Action, operation. 'When they have begun to work a little.'

329. *I did say so.* Iago observes the inflamed looks of Othello who was going to him in a furious manner, and noting with satisfaction that it was the effect of his poison, says to himself: '*I did say so* — it is just as I have said. The Moor already changes with my poison and it is already burning his blood most fiercely.'

330. *Mandragora.* Popularly called 'mandrake'—a soporific herb. Cf. *A. & C.* I. v. 4: 'Give me to drink mandragora ... That I may sleep out this great gap of time My Antony is away.'

333. *Ow'dst.* Ownedst, hadst. See I. i. 66.

Iago. How now, my lord!
Oth. What sense had I in her stol'n hours of lust?
I saw 't not, thought it not: it harm'd not me:
I slept the next night well, fed well, was free and merry.
I found not Cassio's kisses on her lips:
He that is robb'd, not wanting what is stol'n,
Let him not know 't, and he 's not robb'd at all.
Iago. I am sorry to hear this.

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338. *What sense had I in her stol'n hours.* The quarto reading is 'What sense had I *of* her stol'n hours.' Knight remarks: "*Sense of* is the modern use of the term *knowledge of;* 'sense in' is the more proper and peculiarly Shakespearean use, which implies the impression upon the senses, and not upon the understanding. The difference is the same as between *a sensible man* and *a man sensible to pain.*" Knight is right. Othello purports to think: 'If this fool Iago had not brought the information to my ears, my other senses, which were unaffected by her stolen hours of lust, would not have interfered with my peace and happiness' and he goes on to speak specifically of these other senses. To begin with, *his eyes saw it not* and therefore he thought it not, it did not harm him, he slept the next night well, fed well, was free and merry — so it was not his sense of *sight* which occasioned the misery. Neither was it his sense of *touch, taste,* or *smell,* for none of these found Cassio's kisses on her lips (in place of hers which had been stolen away) — indeed how could they when a robbery is never known, the thing robbed not wanting?

"Cf. Fletcher's *Valentinian,* iii. 1, where Maximus addressing his wife who has been ravished by the Emperor, says: 'Kiss me, I find no Cæsar here; these lips taste not of ravisher'; and Massinger, *Emperor of the East,* iv. 5. 105, 'Methinks I find Paulinus on her lips.'" (Deighton). Steevens quotes Middleton, *The Witch*:

"I feele no ease; the burthen's not yet off,
So long as the abuse sticks in my knowledge.
Oh, tis a paine of hell to know ones shame!
Had it byn hid and don, it had byn don happy,
For he that's ignorant lives long and merry;"

and again:

"Hadst thou byn secret, then had I byn happy,
And had a hope (like man) of joies to come.
Now here I stand a stayne to my creation;
And, which is heavier than all torments to me,
The understanding of this base adultery," etc.

340. *The next night.* On this, Rolfe and the Cowden-Clarkes observe: "Indication of long time; as if many nights had elapsed." — As if they had *not!*

Oth. I had been happy, if the general camp,
Pioners and all, had tasted her sweet body,
So I had nothing known. Oh, now, for ever
Farewell the tranquil mind! farewell content!
Farewell the plumèd troops, and the big wars,
That makes ambition virtue! Oh, farewell!
Farewell the neighing steed, and the shrill trump,
The spirit-stirring drum, the ear-piercing fife,
The royal banner, and all quality,
Pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war!
And, O you mortal engines, whose rude throats
The immortal Jove's dread clamours counterfeit,
Farewell! Othello's occupation 's gone!

Iago. Is 't possible, my lord?

Oth. Villain, be sure thou prove my love a whore,
Be sure of it: give me the ocular proof;
Or, by the worth of mine eternal soul,
Thou hadst been better have been born a dog
Than answer my wak'd wrath!

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345. *General camp.* Whole camp.

346. *Pioners.* (Pioneers). Here signifies 'the vilest of the camp.' Pioneers were orginally degraded soldiers, employed to clear the way before the army.

347. *So.* Provided that; if.

350. *Makes.* This is the reading of the quartos as well as of the Folio. Editors change it into *make*, but it is unnecessary, as Shakespeare often uses the singular verb with a plural nominative. Cf. I. i.171 & II. i. 28.

353. *Quality.* Peculiar accompaniments.

354. *Circumstance.* Grand appurtenance. Cf. I. i. 12.

355. *Mortal engines.* Deadly cannons. *Rude* — loudly roaring.

356. *Jove's dread clamours*, i. e., thunder. The Cowden-Clarkes observe: "Here, although Othello is a Christian (for Iago says, speaking of the Moor in Act II. sc. 3, 'Were't to renounce his baptism, all seals and symbols of redeemed sin,' &c.) he uses the familiar '*Jove*,' so generally employed." See note on II. i. 77.

358. *Is 't possible, my lord* (that you should thus lose your self-control?)

361. *Mine.* This is the folio reading. The quarto reading is *man's*, and Steevens sugggests that 'Shakespeare might have designed an opposition between *man* and *dog*.'

Iago. Is 't come to this?
Oth. Make me to see 't; or, at the least, so prove it,
That the probation bear no hinge nor loop
To hang a doubt on; or woe upon thy life!
Iago. My noble lord,—
Oth. If thou dost slander her and torture me,
Never pray more; abandon all remorse;
On horror's head horrors accumulate;
Do deeds to make heaven weep, all earth amaz'd:
For nothing canst thou to damnation add
Greater than that.
Iago. O grace! O heaven, forgive me!
Are you a man? have you a soul? or sense?
God be wi' you; take mine office. Oh, wretched fool,
That liv'st to make thine honesty a vice!
Oh, monstrous world! Take note, take note, O world,
To be direct and honest is not safe.
I thank you for this profit; and from hence
I 'll love no friend, sith love breeds such offence.

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365. *Probation.* Proof. Cf. *Ham.* I. i. 156: 'and of the truth herein This present object made probation.'

369. *Remorse.* 'Compunctious restraint.' Hudson explains:— 'Cast off the restraints and regards of conscience altogether.' The meaning of the passage is: 'If you are slandering her and torturing me, you may henceforward give up all prayer (for there can be no more salvation for your soul), and you may, abandoning all restraint of conscience, commit the most horrible crimes and deeds which will astound all human beings and make angels weep, for your damnation (already assured by your present deed) cannot possibly become worse by anything whatsoever.

371. *Weep.* Cf. *M. for M.* II. ii. 121: 'Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven, As make the angels weep.'

376. *Lov'st ... vice.* 'Surely the man that *loves* to carry his honesty so far that it becomes a vice is what Iago means when he calls himself a *fool*' (Knight). The quarto reading is '*livest.*'

379. *This profit.* This good lesson (Schmidt).

380. *Sith.* Since. 'Marsh points out the distinction between *sith* and *since*, viz., that *sith* belongs to logic and *since* to time, a distinction which the printers of Shakespeare's plays were not always careful to preserve' (Furness).

Oth. Nay, stay; thou shouldst be honest.
Iago. I should be wise, for honesty 's a fool,
And loses that it works for.
Oth. By the world,
I think my wife be honest, and think she is not;
I think that thou art just and think thou art not.
I 'll have some proof. My name, that was as fresh
As Dian's visage, is now begrim'd and black

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381. *Thou shouldst be honest.* It looks as if you were honest. Cf. *Mac.* I. iii. 46: 'You should be women; And yet your beards forbid me to interpret That you are so.'

382. *I should be wise.* I *ought* to be wise. Iago plays upon the word *should* which Othello used in a different sense.

384. *Be ... is.* '*Be* expresses more doubt than *is* after a verb of thinking ... very significant is this difference in this line of the doubtful Othello ... where the *is* is emphatic and the line contains the extra dramatic syllable.' (Abbott).

386. *My name.* This is the reading of the folios as well as of the first quarto. In the second and third quartos it was altered — presumably from a difficulty of making sense out of *my name* — into *her name* which is now accepted by most editors. On this, Knight remarks: "There is probably not a more fatal corruption of the meaning of the poet [than *her* of Q 2] amongst the thousand corruptions for which his editors are answerable. It destroys the master-key to Othello's character. It is his intense feeling of *honour* that makes his wife's supposed fault so terrific to him. It is not that *Desdemona's* name is begrimmed and black, but that *his own name* is degraded. This one thought, here for the first time exhibited, pervades all the rest of the play; and when we understand how the poison operates on Othello's mind, we are quite prepared fully to believe him when he says, in conclusion, — 'For naught I did in hate, but all in honour.' The thought that his own name is now tarnished drives him at once into a phrenzy. He has said, '*I'll have some proof*;' but the moment that the idea of dishonour comes across his sensitive nature he bursts into uncontrolled fury: 'If there be cords, ... *I 'll not endure it*.'" Dyce observes: "The word 'own' in the phrase 'mine own face,' is alone sufficient to refute Knight's long and laborious defence of 'My.' Othello would not have said, 'MY name is now as black as mine OWN face.'" Dyce's observation applies with equal force to the other case, for the appropriateness of *own* is not enhanced if Othello says, 'HER name is now as black as MINE OWN face;' indeed, the addition of *own* seems grammatically and logically proper only when the comparison relates to members of the same person. *Her name* may be compared with *your face*, *my face*, *her face*, or *her own face*, but not

As mine own face. If there be cords, or knives,
Poison, or fire, or suffocating streams,
I 'll not endure it: Would I were satisfied !
Iago. I see you are eaten up with passion ;
I do repent me that I put it to you.
You would be satisfied ?
Oth. Would ! nay, I will.

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appropriately with *your own face* or *mine own face*. *Your own face* and *mine own face* must properly have for comparison, something pertaining to *you* or *me*, upon which the force of *own* may be reflected. The words '*mine own face*' in l. 388, grammatically as well as logically require '*My name*' in l. 386, however much *own* may sound superfluous to the sense. Besides, Othello could not speak of *her name* as having been 'as fresh as Dian's visage,' because, as he is now inclined to believe, it was never so, except in his deluded imagination. His agony is, *not* that *her* name which was pure only in his imagination is now discovered to be otherwise, but that *his* name, which was as fresh and bright as Dian's visage, is now, on account of the dirt sticking on to it, as dark as his own face. *As mine own face* has the force of '*even as my face*.' The comparison to *Dian's* face is by some supposed to establish '*her name*' in l. 386, but of course a *man's* name may quite as appropriately be compared to the pure and bright face of the goddess of chastity as a woman's. If any doubt still remains about the correctness of '*My name*' — the reading both of the folios and the first quarto — it will disappear when the meaning of '*I'll not endure it*' in l. 390 is understood.

388-90. *If there be ... endure it.* It is a gross mistake to interpret this passage, as some annotators do, as referring to the several means by which Othello thinks he might be revenged against Desdemona. Why should he enumerate these and prefix an *if* and a *be* to them, as if he was in doubt of their existence or about his ability to secure them? Could he not indeed get any cords, knives, or poison, or at least fire to execute his vengeance! The reference is to the punishments which may await him in hell if he should put an end to Desdemona. Believing at the particular moment that Iago's suspicions about Desdemona are only too true, Othello feels the intensest agony that his pure and bright honour should have been tarnished by this filth which stuck to him in the person of his wife. He resolves to satisfy his feeling of vengeance by putting an end to her, and says: 'Whatever punishments may await me in hell — cords, knives, poison, fire, or suffocating streams—*I'll not endure it*; I cannot for one moment allow this dirt on my fair honour but will set it right by putting an end to the jade who has disgraced me. I *will* do the deed. Oh, I wish I were satisfied about her guilt that I may proceed to do it at once.

Iago. And may: but, how? how satisfied, my lord?
Would you, the supervisor, grossly gape on?
Behold her topp'd?
Oth. Death and damnation. Oh!
Iago. It were a tedious difficulty, I think,
To bring them to that prospect. Damn them then,
If ever mortal eyes do see them bolster
More than their own. What then? How then?
What shall I say? Where 's satisfaction?
It is impossible you should see this,
Were they as prime as goats, as hot as monkeys,
As salt as wolves in pride, and fools as gross
As ignorance made drunk. But yet, I say,
If imputation and strong circumstances,
Which lead directly to the door of truth,
Will give you satisfaction, you might have 't.
Oth. Give me a living reason she 's disloyal.
Iago. I do not like the office;
But, sith I am enter'd in this cause so far,
Prick'd to 't by foolish honesty and love,
I will go on. I lay with Cassio lately;
And, being troubled with a raging tooth,
I could not sleep.
There are a kind of men so loose of soul,
That in their sleeps will mutter their affairs;

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403. *Prime.* 'Eager,' 'forward,' 'lustful.' *(Obs.)*

404. *Salt.* (Fig.) Salacious, lecherous, lustful. *Pride*—fullness of animal spirits; wantonness; hence—lust, sexual desire. *(Obs.)*

406. *If imputation ... circumstances.* Imputation based on strong circumstantial evidence.

409. *A living reason.* A reason that has vitality (reality) about it, not a mere conjecture. 'That has the life of truth and fact in it, not founded on mere surmise' (The Cowden-Clarkes).

412. *Prick'd.* 'Spurred,' 'incited.'

416. *Loose of soul.* Incapable of restraining their thoughts.

417. *Sleeps.* Cf. 'loves' in l. 420. Also, *Ham.* I. i. 173: 'As needful in our *loves*'; *id.* IV. vii. 30: 'Break not your *sleeps* for that.'

One of this kind is Cassio.
In sleep I heard him say 'Sweet Desdemona,
Let us be wary, let us hide our loves;'
And then, sir, would he gripe and wring my hand,
Cry 'O sweet creature!' and then kiss me hard,
As if he pluck'd up kisses by the roots
That grew upon my lips, lay his leg o'er my thigh,
And sigh and kiss and then cry 'Cursèd fate
That gave thee to the Moor!'

Oth. Oh, monstrous! monstrous!

Iago. Nay, this was but his dream.

Oth. But this denoted a foregone conclusion;
'T is a shrewd doubt, though it be but a dream.

Iago. And this may help to thicken other proofs
That do demonstrate thinly.

Oth. I'll tear her all to pieces!

Iago. Nay, but be wise: yet we see nothing done;
She may be honest yet. Tell me but this,
Have you not sometimes seen a handkerchief
Spotted with strawberries, in your wife's hand?

Oth. I gave her such a one; 't was my first gift.

Iago. I know not that; but such a handkerchief—
I am sure it was your wife's — did I to-day
See Cassio wipe his beard with.

Oth. If it be that,—

Iago. If it be that, or any, it was hers.
It speaks against her with the other proofs.

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421. *Gripe.* Grip, grasp.

428. *Conclusion.* 'An experiment, or trial' (Malone). Cf. *Ham.* III. iv. 195: 'To try conclusions.' Delius thinks there is an allusion here to the 'conclusion' in II. i. 263.

429. *A shrewd doubt.* A sharp or clever suspicion. See 'doubt,' l. 188.

432. *Yet we see nothing done.* 'An oblique and secret mock at Othello's saying, 'Give me the ocular proof' (Warburton).

440-1. This is the exact reading of the first folio as well as of the quartos, except that the latter have a comma instead of a full stop at the

Oth. Oh, that the slave had forty thousand lives !
One is too poor, too weak for my revenge.
Now do I see 't is true. Look here, Iago;
All my fond love thus do I blow to heaven.
'T is gone.
Arise, black vengeance, from the hollow hell !

---

end of l. 440. The later folios have '*any, if 't was hers,*' and Malone's emendation is '*any that was hers.*' I think the text, as it stands, is quite correct and good. Iago echoes Othello's words and says : " If it be that, or any, (i. e., whether it be that or any other,) *one thing I am sure of*— it was hers. *Therefore, whichever it may be,* it speaks against her with the other proofs." Iago had already mentioned that he was sure the handkerchief was Desdemona's [l. 438], and when Othello says 'If it be *that,* —' laying particular stress on its being that which was his gift, Iago interrupts him and calls his attention to the fact that the handkerchief he saw in Cassio's hand *was* Desdemona's, whether or not it was that particular one. He goes a step further and suggests the conclusion, — 'It speaks against her with the other proofs.' Malone's emendation, generally accepted by editors, as well as the unauthorised alteration made in the later folios makes Iago abandon his position of certainty in regard to the ownership of the handkerchief [l. 438] for one of conditional assertion and inference.

442. *The slave.* I do not know of any commentator who does not take this as referring to Cassio. Furness quotes Booth who says : 'Whether this refers to Cassio or Desdemona I'm uncertain. He would prepare swift means of death for her and tear her all to pieces, yet *slave* seems very inappropriate to apply to a woman. I think he has Cassio in mind, and his reference to him in the Fifth Act, 'Had all his hairs been lives,' seems to give an additional warrant.' The learned editor adds : 'Assuredly, it was Cassio. I doubt Othello even heard what Iago had just said.' [Though, in V. ii., Othello indeed says of Cassio, 'Had all his hairs been lives, my great revenge Had stomach for them all', I cannot help thinking that he refers to *Desdemona* when he exclaims, 'Oh, that the slave had forty thousand lives !' The course of thought in Othello's mind — which will be explained in the Exposition — as well as the words 'too *weak*' in l. 443 and the references to *love* in ll. 445 and 448, all support this interpretation. '*Slave*' in l. 442 means 'a wretch who has completely surrendered herself to another.']

Forty thousand lives. 'Elze calls attention to Shakespeare's fondness for this number as an expression of indefiniteness' (Furness). Cf. *Ham* V. i. 257 : 'Forty thousand brothers.'

445. Othello utters this line looking up towards the sky, and actually blows away a bit of paper or something, before he says *'Tis gone.*

447. *The hollow hell.* The quarto reading is '*thy hollow cell.*' War-

Yield up, O love, thy crown and hearted throne
To tyrannous hate ! Swell, bosom, with thy fraught,
For 't is of aspics' tongues !

Iago. Yet be content.

Oth. Oh, blood, blood, blood !

Iago. Patience, I say; your mind perhaps may change.

Oth. Never, Iago. Like to the Pontic sea,
Whose icy current and compulsive course

---

burton suggests '*th' unhallow'd cell.*' Knight remarks : — "It seems perfectly incredible that Johnson, Steevens and Malone should have rejected the magnificent reading 'hollow hell ;' if it had failed to impress them by its power, the imitations of it by Milton should have rendered it sacred. But let us only mark the opposition of the two lines : 'All my fond love thus do *I blow to heaven.* Arise, black vengeance, from the hollow *hell.*" Cf. *Par. Lost,* i. 314 : 'He call'd so loud, that all the hollow deep Of hell resounded.'

448. *Hearted throne.* Thy throne located in the heart. Cf. *T. N.* II. iv. 21 : 'It gives an echo to the very seat Where Love is throned.'

449. *Swell.* 'Because the fraught is of poison' (Warburton).

450. *Aspic.* Asp, a venomous serpent.

Be content. Be calm and composed. Do not give way to passion.

452. This is the quarto reading. *Perhaps* is omitted in the folio, probably by the compositor's oversight.

453-60. These lines are not in the 1st quarto. Steevens points out that Shakespeare got his illustration from Holland's translation of Pliny's *Natural History* (1601) : "And the sea Pontus euer more floweth and runneth out into Propontis, but the sea neuer retireth backe againe within Pontus." The simile is condemned by Pope and Steevens as unnatural and incongruous ; but Swinburne rightly appreciates it as "one of the most precious jewels that ever the prodigal afterthought of a great poet bestowed upon the rapture of his readers," and he points out that it is not "incongruous with the circumstances — out of tone and out of harmony and out of keeping with character and tune and time." "In other lips indeed than Othello's," says he, "at the crowning minute of culminant agony, the rush of imaginative reminiscence which brings back upon his eyes and ears the lightning foam and tideless thunder of the Pontic sea might seem a thing less natural than sublime. But Othello has the passion of a poet closed in as it were and shut up behind the passion of a hero. For all his practical readiness of martial eye and ruling hand in action, he is also in his season 'of imagination all compact.'"

454. *Compulsive.* Compelling ; sweeping everything before it. Cf. *Ham.* III. iv. 86 ; also '*compulsative*' in *Ham.* I. i. 103.

Ne'er keeps retiring ebb, but sweeps due on
To the Propontic and the Hellespont,
Even so my bloody thoughts, with violent pace,
Shall ne'er look back, ne'er ebb to humble love,
Till that a capable and wide revenge
Swallow them up. Now, by yond marble heaven,
In the due reverence of a sacred vow [*Kneels.*
I here engage my words.
Iago. Do not rise yet.— [*Kneels.*
Witness, you ever-burning lights above,
You elements that clip us round about,
Witness that here Iago doth give up

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455. *Ne'er keeps ... due on.* The folio has 'Ne'er *keeps* retiring ebb, but *keeps* due on'—the repetition of *keeps* being evidently due to the compositor's error. Editors are generally agreed in considering the first '*keeps*' a misprint, and they accept *feels, knows, brooks,* or *makes* as the right word. I am inclined to think that the second '*keeps*' is a misprint for '*sweeps.*' 'Ne'er keeps retiring ebb' means 'never allows the retiring wave to be formed.'

456. The *Pontic Sea* is the Black Sea, the *Propontic* is the Sea of Marmora. The *Hellespont* is the Dardanelles.

458. *Ne'er ebb to gentle love.* Never be pacified into gentleness and tenderness.

459. *Capable.* Capacious, comprehensive, ample.

460. *Marble heaven.* Hazlitt thinks that the epithet '*marble*' is "suggested by the hardness of his heart from the sense of injury, the texture of the outward object being borrowed from that of the thoughts." Schmidt queries if the epithet may not be applied to the heavens on account of their eternity. I think '*marble*' here means 'bright and shining (like marble)', and, as Furness rightly remarks, the epithet refers to *color,* not to texture nor to substance. Cf. *Par. Lost,* iii. 566, 'The pure *marble* air' which Upton explains as 'sparkling', 'glowing.' Also "æquor marmoreum" of Virgil, 'the sea shining or resplendent like marble.'

463. The time is Sunday *afternoon,* as will be seen from the Exposition. Iago kneels and utters his vow, with hands uplifted and *eyes closed,* so as to invest it with a more solemn air than Othello's, and he invokes at once the sun, the moon and the stars above, as well as the elements around, to witness his solemn pledge! It is a mistake to suppose that the time is after sunset and that the 'ever-burning lights' are stars,

464. *Clip.* Embrace, encompass,

The execution of his wit, hands, heart,
To wrong'd Othello's service! Let him command,
And to obey shall be in me remorse,
What bloody business ever. [*They rise.*

---

466. *Execution.* 'That is, employment, exercise' (Malone). Cf. *Tr. & Cr.* V. vii. 6: 'In fellest manner execute your arms.'

468-9. This passage has landed editors and annotators in a variety of needless emendations and unsatisfactory interpretations. Pope alters 'And to obey' to '*Not* to obey'; Theobald and Hanmer change it to '*Nor* to obey', while Jennens corrects it to '*And not* to obey.' Upton's emendation is: 'And to obey shall be in me *no* remorse.' Farmer thinks 'And to obey' is a misprint for '*An*' to obey' (i. e., *if* to obey, *even though* to obey). On the other hand, many editors uphold the text and explain it in various ways. Hudson says: "*Remorse* for *conscience,* simply. Iago has said before, 'I hold it very stuff o' the conscience to do no contrived murder.' So the meaning here is, 'Let him command whatever bloody work he may, to perform it shall be with me a matter of conscience.' This explanation is Joseph Crosby's." Johnson, Steevens and others take *remorse* as equivalent to *pity* or *tenderness.* Johnson's explanation is: 'Let him command whatever bloody businesss, and in me it shall be an act, not of cruelty, but of tenderness, to obey him: not of malice to others, but of tenderness to him.' Tollet says: 'That is, let him command any business, and to obey him shall be in me an act of pity and compassion for wrong'd Othello.' Knight interprets *remorse* as *mercy.* He says: "It is quite clear that Othello interrupts the conclusion of Iago's speech. At the moment when he has said that 'obedience to Othello shall stand in the place of remorse (mercy) — What bloody business ever' (Othello may command), Othello, jumping at his meaning, at once sets him upon the murder of Cassio." [I am sure the text is perfect as it is. *Remorse,* as we now use the word, indicates the gnawing anguish excited by a sense of any atrocious crime *committed,* and is due to the fear that the favour of God has been forfeited in consequence. Thus, 'David was struck with *remorse* for the murder of Uriah.' Shakespeare, however, uses the word, here and elsewhere (see l. 369), to signify the biting pain of conscience which one feels when one is *about to do* or *is doing* a wicked or cruel deed. Iago, according to his humble estimate of himself, is a man of some "little godliness," holding it the "very stuff o' the conscience to do no contriv'd murder" as it would entail a forfeiture of divine grace! So he told the general before; but now his love and commisseration for him have induced him to take a solemn vow that he would devote himself — head, hands and heart — to his service, and he is accordingly prepared to do any bloody deed whatsoever to avenge his friend's wrong. Says he: *'Let him command,' and, what bloody business ever* (it may be), *to obey shall be in me remorse;* i. e., the impulse to obey shall in me *take*

Oth. I greet thy love,
Not with vain thanks, but with acceptance bounteous,
And will upon the instant put thee to't;
Within these three days let me hear thee say
That Cassio 's not alive.
Iago. My friend is dead; 't is done at your request:
But let her live.
Oth. Damn her, lewd minx! Oh, damn her! damn her!
Come, go with me apart; I will withdraw
To furnish me with some swift means of death
For the fair devil. Now art thou my lieutenant.
Iago. I am your own for ever. [*Exeunt.*

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the place of remorse — there shall not be the usual remorse in me, but, in its place, the craving to obey the command. Whatever bloody deed my friend may command me to do, my conscience shall not be struck with remorse (anguish) while doing it, on the contrary it will goad me to do it and so obey the command.' This readiness of god-fearing Iago to do any atrocious deed whatsoever in the service of his wronged friend indicates at once the magnitude of his love for him and his belief in the righteousness of the cause.]

470. *Bounteous* — because he generously commissions him to do what ought properly to be done with his own hands. Othello is so carried away by Iago's professed devotion and love that he practically identifies him with himself and does not think it at all dishonourable to request him to despatch Cassio.

476. *Minx.* 'A pert wanton woman.'

477. *Go with me apart*, i. e., aside, where they could talk more secretly. See II. iii. 380. Q. Whither did they withdraw and what was the substance of their continued conversation?

479. *Now art thou my lieutenant.* It is quite absurd to interpret this literally and ask, as Professor Wilson (Christopher North) does, "What did Othello intend to do, after all was accomplished? He was stone-blind to the future. What does he expect? that when he has killed his wife, everything is to go on as smoothly as before? That no notice will be taken of it? or that he will have to make another speech to the Senate? He has told them how he married her, — the counterpart will be to relate 'a plain, unvarnished tale of my whole course' of smothering and stabbing her with bolster and dagger. 'Now art thou my lieutenant' shows — if not stone-blindness, — a singular confidence in the future." What Othello intended to do after the murder of Desdemona and Cassio,

SCENE IV. *Before the Castle.*

Enter DESDEMONA, EMILIA, *and* Clown.

Des. Do you know, sirrah, where Lieutenant Cassio lies?

Clown. I dare not say he lies any where.

Des. Why, man?

Clown. He 's a soldier, and for one to say a soldier lies, 'tis stabbing.

Des. Go to; where lodges he?

Clown. To tell you where he lodges, is to tell you where I lie.

Des. Can any thing be made of this?

Clown. I know not where he lodges; and for me to devise a lodging, and say he lies here or he lies there, were to lie in mine own throat.

Des. Can you inquire him out, and be edified by report?

Clown. I will catechise the world for him; that is,

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we shall learn from the Exposition. It need only be remarked here that the words 'Now art thou my lieutenant' do not import or refer to the confirmation of Iago in the office of lieutenant. It would indeed be a mean reward for a friend's genuine love and devotion, to grant or promise him a promotion in return. Since the dismissal of Cassio, Iago has been acting as Othello's lieutenant. Now, Othello plays on the word and tells him by way of expressing his high appreciation of the friendly services he is to do him, '*Now* art thou my *lieutenant*' — lieutenant, indeed, in a double way, because he is to kill Cassio for him and is to be his right hand and counsel throughout the 'bloody business.'

2. *Lies.* 'Lodges', 'resides.' Cf. *T. G. of V.* IV. ii. 137: 'Where lies Sir Proteus?'

6. *'Tis stabbing.* The result will be stabbing (by the soldier).

13. *To lie ... throat.* "This meant, to utter a wilful lie. 'To lie in the teeth' was less intentional and gave less offence' (Hunter).

14. *Be edified by report.* Desdemona mocks the clown by imitating his affected phraseology.

16. *For him.* To find him out.

make questions, and by them answer.

Des. Seek him, bid him come hither; tell him I have moved my lord on his behalf, and hope all will be well.

Clown. To do this is within the compass of man's wit, and therefore I will attempt the doing it. [*Exit.*

Des. Where should I lose the handkerchief, Emilia?

Emil. I know not, madam.

Des. Believe me, I had rather have lost my purse
Full of crusadoes; and, but my noble Moor
Is true of mind and made of no such baseness
As jealous creatures are, it were enough
To put him to ill thinking.

Emil. Is he not jealous?

Des. Who, he? I think the sun where he was born
Drew all such humours from him.

Emil. Look, where he comes.

Enter OTHELLO.

Des. I will not leave him now till Cassio
Be call'd to him.—How is 't with you, my lord?

Oth. Well, my good lady.—[*Aside*] Oh, hardness to dissemble!—

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17. *By them answer.* By means of those questions, i. e., the answers I get to them, make (my) answer (to you).

19. *I have moved my lord on his behalf.* The Cowden-Clarkes remark: "This introduces short time again; making the present period a following up of Desdemona's appeal to her husband that same morning, at the commencement of the previous scene: 'I have been talking with a suitor here,' &c." Of course, all this took place on the same day, but the reader must put up with his perplexity until he goes through the Exposition of this play and the exposure of the Double Time Theory, which follows it. See notes on III. iii. 292 and 340.

25. *Crusadoes.* Portuguese gold coins current in England in the time of Shakespeare, so called from the *cross* stamped upon them.

28. *Ill thinking.* 'Suspicious thoughts.'

30. *Drew all such humours from him.* Absorbed all such evil moistures from his constitution. In allusion to the old belief regarding the *humours* of the body, on the relative proportion of which the temperament of the individual was supposed to depend.

How do you, Desdemona?
Des. Well, my good lord.
Oth. Give me your hand. This hand is moist, my lady.
Des. It yet hath felt no age nor known no sorrow.
Oth. This argues fruitfulness and liberal heart —
Hot, hot, and moist. This hand of yours requires
A sequester from liberty, fasting and prayer,
Much castigation, exercise devout;
For here 's a young and sweating devil — here —
That commonly rebels. 'T is a good hand,
A frank one.
Des. You may, indeed, say so;
For 't was that hand that gave away my heart.
Oth. A liberal hand! The hearts of old gave hands;
But our new heraldry is hands, not hearts.

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36. *Nor known no sorrow.* Double negative. See I. i. 42-3. Q. Has she not known any sorrow on account of her old, heart-broken father?

37. *This* — refers to what is expressed later on, — *hot, hot and moist.*

Argues. 'Indicates,' 'proves.'

Fruitfulness. Bounteousness. Cf. II. iii. 336. Othello is either referring to some vulgar notion that a hot, sweaty palm indicates sensuality and lust, or has invented and gently hinted such a notion, to watch its effect on Desdemona.

38. *This hand of yours.* Examining the palm and speaking of the general import of the lines and marks therein.

39. *Sequester.* For 'sequestration' — separation, exclusion.

40. *Castigation.* Physical punishment or suffering — impliedly, to keep down passion.

Exercise. Performance of religious duties.

41. *A young and sweating devil.* A combination of marks or lines which indicates hot lust, the cause of the sweating.

42. *That commonly rebels* (and probably does so in your case).

45-6. *The hearts of old ... hands, not hearts.* This passage, which has given rise to a good deal of comment, does not yet seem to be rightly understood. Warburton supposed that it contained a satirical allusion to the new order of baronets instituted by James I., in 1611, the distinguishing mark of which was the armorial bearing of a bloody hand; and he came to the conclusion — which has since been disproved by other evidence — that the play was not written before that date. War-

45-6. *The hearts of old ... hands, not hearts.*

burton likewise altered 'The *hearts* of old gave *hands*' in line 45, to 'The *hands* of old gave *hearts*,' so as to make it a suitable reply to Desdemona's remark, "For 'twas that *hand* that gave away my heart." Not so, says her husband, "The hands of old indeed gave hearts; but the custom now is to give hands without hearts." [Q. What has become of Othello's words, 'A liberal heart'?] Steevens pooh-poohs the idea that the passage contains any reference to the new order of baronets created by King James, and says: 'The absurdity of making Othello so familiar with British heraldry, the utter want of consistency as well as policy in any sneer of Shakespeare at the badge of honours instituted by a Prince whom, on all other occasions, he was solicitous to flatter, and at whose court this very piece was acted in 1613, most strongly incline me to question the propriety of Warburton's historical explanation.' White adopts Warburton's idea but holds that the passage was a later insertion. I think it not improbable that the words, '*our* NEW *heraldry*' are a subsequent alteration suggested to the poet by the NEW order of baronets and the allusion was made without any satire whatever, though Dyce is of opinion that the word '*heraldry*' was suggested by the words in the preceeding line, 'gave hands' (to 'give arms' being a heraldic term). In any case, the word necessarily bears a figurative meaning in the context and is equivalent to *custom, ceremony, display.* Annotators seem to miss the real construction of the passage and content themselves with explaining that, in old days, the union of hands (in marriage) was the result of a union of hearts, but now, hands alone are united, not necessarily hearts. This is expressed pretty clumsily by Malone: 'The hearts of old, says Othello, dictated the union of *hands*, which formerly were joined with *the hearts* of the parties *in them;* but in our modern marriages, *hands* alone are united, without *hearts*.' To note the true construction: line 46 is elliptical — '*But our new heraldry is hands* giving hearts, *not hearts* giving hands.' The context is as follows:—Othello pretends to read Desdemona's sensual character in her palm and concludes his revelation saying ''Tis a good hand, A frank one'—*frank*, because it openly revealed its true character. Desdemona understands the remark in a complimentary sense and says: 'You may, indeed, say so; For 'twas that hand that gave away my heart (to you).' Othello, however, chooses to take this as a confession that she gave away her heart *to others*, and twits her, saying: "Indeed! Then, yours is a *liberal* hand, for it gave away your heart (to others). '*It was that* HAND *that gave away my heart*'! yes, that's our new heraldry. The days are gone by when *hearts* gave hands, and the present practice is that *hands* give hearts, not that hearts give hands." The meaning is that, formerly, hearts (united in love) gave hands (i. e., united hands in marriage), but now, hands (united in marriage) give away hearts (to whom they choose). The insinuation is clear that in old days people loved and married, but now they marry and love (whom they like). Desdemona does not understand this mystic talk

Des. I cannot speak of this. Come now, your promise.
Oth. What promise, chuck?
Des. I have sent to bid Cassio come speak with you.
Oth. I have a salt and sorry rheum offends me:
Lend me thy handkerchief.
Des. Here, my lord.
Oth. That which I gave you.
Des. I have it not about me.
Oth. Not?
Des. No, indeed, my lord.
Oth. That is a fault.
That handkerchief
Did an Egyptian to my mother give;
She was a charmer, and could almost read
The thoughts of people: she told her, while she kept it,
'T would make her amiable and subdue my father
Entirely to her love, but if she lost it
Or made a gift of it, my father's eye
Should hold her loathèd and his spirits should hunt
After new fancies. She dying gave it me;
And bid me, when my fate would have me wiv'd,
To give it her. I did so: and take heed on 't;
Make it a darling like your precious eye:

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about "new heraldry" and drops the topic by saying, 'I cannot speak' &c.

48. *Chuck* — *chick*, chicken, a term of endearment here used half sarcastically.

50. *A salt and sorry rheum.* A saltish and sore (painful) discharge from the eyes. The quarto reading is 'A salt and *sullen* rheum.'

Offends. Which offends (troubles).

55. Compare this with what Othello says afterwards in V. ii: 'It was a handkerchief, an antique token My father gave my mother.'

56. *Charmer.* Enchantress.

58. *Amiable.* Lovable, love-inspiring.

61. *Loathed.* As an object of disgust.

Spirits. Soul — same as *spirit* in III. iii. 259.

64. *Her.* To my wife (implied in *wiv'd*).

To lose 't or give 't away were such perdition 66
As nothing else could match.
Des. Is 't possible?
Oth. 'T is true; there's magic in the web of it.
A sibyl, that had number'd in the world 69
The sun to course two hundred compasses,
In her prophetic fury sew'd the work;
The worms were hallow'd that did breed the silk;
And it was dy'd in mummy which the skilful 73
Conserv'd of maidens' hearts.
Des. Indeed! is 't true?
Oth. Most veritable; therefore look to 't well.
Des. Then would to heaven that I had never seen 't!
Oth. Ha! wherefore?
Des. Why do you speak so startingly and rash? 78
Oth. Is 't lost? is 't gone? speak, is it out o' the way?
Des. Heaven bless us!
Oth. Say you? 81
Des. It is not lost; but what an if it were?
Oth. How!
Des. I say, it is not lost.
Oth. Fetch't, let me see 't.
Des. Why, so I can: but I will not now.
This is a trick to put me from my suit; 86
Pray you, let Cassio be receiv'd again.
Oth. Fetch me the handkerchief; my mind misgives.

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66. *Were such perdition.* Would involve such ruin.

69-70. *Numbered ... compasses.* 'Numbered the sun to *course*, to run, *two hundred compasses*, two hundred annual circuits' (Johnson).

71. *In her prophetic fury.* 'In a paroxysm of prophetic excitement.'

73. *Mummy.* A balsamic liquor obtained from embalmed bodies (in the present case, of maidens) — formerely supposed to have magical and medicinal properties.

74. *Conserv'd.* 'Prepared as a conserve.'

78. *So startingly and rash.* So abruptly and violently. Cf. *M. for M.* V. I. 36: 'most bitterly and strange.'

81. *Say you?* — What say you?

Des. Come, come;
You 'll never meet a more sufficient man. 90
Oth. The handkerchief!
Des. I pray, talk me of Cassio.
Oth. The handkerchief!
Des. A man that all his time
Hath founded his good fortunes on your love, 93
Shar'd dangers with you,—
Oth. The handkerchief!
Des. In sooth, you are to blame.
Oth. Away! [*Exit.*
Emil. Is not this man jealous?
Des. I ne'er saw this before. 99
Sure, there's some wonder in this handkerchief;
I am most unhappy in the loss of it.
Emil. 'T is not a year or two shows us a man: 102
They are all but stomachs, and we all but food;
They eat us hungerly, and when they are full
They belch us. Look you, Cassio and my husband!

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90. *Sufficient.* Capable.

91. *Talk me of Cassio.* That is, talk *for* me (for my sake). Cf. I. ii. 72.

93. *Hath founded ... love.* 'Has entirely devoted himself to you and ever looked to you for his welfare and success in life' (Deighton).

99. *I ne'er saw this before.* Another of the many indications of *long time*, cited by the apostles of the so-called 'Double Time' — as if 'long time' required to be *proved* in this play!

102. *'Tis not a year or two*, &c. The remark is a general one, and as Steevens rightly points out, it has 'no reference to the duration of the action, or to the length of time that Desdemona has been married'; nor, I would add, that Emilia has been married either, though she bases the remark on her (evidently personal) experience revealed in the next two lines.

103. *They are all but stomachs ... food.* 'They, every one of them, are merely stomachs for which we, every one of us, are merely food' (Furness).

104. *Hungerly.* Hungrily. Cf. *T. of A.* I. i. 262: 'I feed Most hungerly on your sight.'

105. *Belch us.* Cast us away.

Enter IAGO *and* CASSIO.

Iago. There is no other way; 't is she must do 't:
And, lo, the happiness! go, and impórtune her.
Des. How now, good Cassio! what 's the news with
you?
Cas. Madam, my former suit: I do beseech you
That by your virtuous means I may again
Exist, and be a member of his love
Whom I with all the office of my heart
Entirely honour; I would not be delay'd.
If my offence be of such mortal kind
That nor my service past nor present sorrows
Nor purpos'd merit in futurity
Can ransom me into his love again,
But to know so must be my benefit,
So shall I clothe me in a forc'd content,
And shut myself up in some other course
To fortune's alms.
Des. Alas, thrice-gentle Cassio!
My advocation is not now in tune;
My lord is not my lord, nor should I know him,
Were he in favour as in humour alter'd.

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107. *Lo, the happiness.* Look, what good luck! — referring to the opportune meeting with Desdemona.

110. *Virtuous.* Potent, powerful. Cf. I. iii. 318.

111. *Exist, ... love.* 'i. e., live, which of late I can hardly be said to have done, and be once more a part and parcel of his love' (Deighton).

112. *Office* — 'duty' (which is the quarto reading). L. *officium.*

114. *Mortal.* 'Heinous', 'unforgivable.'

120. *Shut ... course.* Betake myself to some obscure means of earning my livelihood.

121. *To fortune's alms.* 'That is, waiting patiently for whatever bounty or chance may bestow upon me' (Malone). 'Willing to accept whatever lot fortune in its charity may provide for me' (Deighton).

122. *Advocation.* Advocacy, pleading.

In tune. In harmony with the humour of Othello.

124. *Favour.* Face, personal appearence. Cf. I. iii. 340.

So help me every spirit sanctified,
As I have spoken for you all my best
And stood within the blank of his displeasure
For my free speech! You must awhile be patient:
What I can do I will; and more I will
Than for myself I dare: let that suffice you.
Iago. Is my lord angry?
Emil. He went hence but now,
And certainly in strange unquietness.
Iago. Can he be angry? I have seen the cannon
When it hath blown his ranks into the air
And, like the devil, from his very arm
Puff'd his own brother; — and is he angry?
Something of moment then: I will go meet him;
There 's matter in 't indeed, if he be angry.
Des. I prithee, do so.— [*Exit Iago.*
Something, sure, of state,
Either from Venice or some unhatch'd practice
Made démonstrable here in Cyprus to him,
Hath puddled his clear spirit; and in such cases

125-6. *So help me ... best.* 'So may every holy spirit help me according as I have said all I could to him on your behalf; a form of asseveration' (Deighton). Let every holy angel help me only according as it is true that I have said, &c.

127. *Stood within the blank of his displeasure.* Exposed myself to his anger; placed myself within the range of his anger. 'Within the *shot* of his anger' (Johnson). *Blank* is 'the white mark at which the shot or arrows were aimed' (Steevens). Cf. *Ham.* IV. i. 42: 'As level as the cannon to his blank;' *W. T.* II. iii. 5: 'for the harlot king Is quite beyond mine aim, out of the blank.'

135. *From his very arm.* From his side; while standing close beside him.

136. *Puffed his own brother,* 'yet he stood unmoved.'

138. *Matter.* Something serious.

140. *Unhatch'd practice.* 'Undeveloped treason.'

141. *Made demonstrable.* Discovered with certainty; brought to light with convincing proofs.

142. *Puddled.* 'Muddied', 'disturbed' (his unruffled spirit).

Men's natures wrangle with inferior things,
Though great ones are their object. 'T is even so;
For let our finger ache, and it indues
Our other healthful members even to that sense
Of pain: nay, we must think men are not gods,
Nor of them look for such observancy
As fits the bridal. Beshrew me much, Emilia,
I was, unhandsome warrior as I am,
Arraigning his unkindness with my soul;
But now I find I had suborn'd the witness,
And he 's indicted falsely.

Emil. Pray heaven it be state matters, as you think,
And no conception nor no jealous toy,

143-4. *Men's natures ... object.* When men's minds are disturbed by great matters, they lose their temper and quarrel about petty things. *Their object* — 'what their thoughts are concerned about.'

145-6. *It indues ... pain.* 'It endows our other healthful members with the same sense of pain' (The Cowden-Clarkes). It affects the other healthy limbs with a like sense of pain, i. e., makes them participate in it.

148. *Of them.* From them.

Observancy. 'Devotion', 'homage', 'tender attentions.'

149. *As fits the bridal.* As is becoming at the time of marriage (and is shown by the bridegroom to the bride). The Cowden-Clarkes observe: "Another artfully introduced touch of protracted dramatic time; it is, in fact, put into the mouth of a woman *the morning after the celebration of her nuptials, one who is still a bride;* but it gives the effect of being spoken by a woman long past the season of her honey-moon." Alas, the puzzle! But why should it be assumed that the poet's art lies in introducing *long time?*

150. *Unhandsome warrior.* 'Unfair assailant' (Johnson). The Cowden-Clarkes discover in this phrase 'a lovely reminiscence of her husband's calling her *my fair warrior* in the joy of his first meeting with her on arrival;' but I doubt if this reminiscence will remain when the length of time which elapsed between the two utterances is clearly proved.

151-3. *Arraigning ... falsely.* I was charging him with unkindness before my soul, but I now find I had procured false evidence and the indictment is false. The 'witness' referred to is the 'solitary instance of discord in her advocation' which had been '*suborned,* by falsely interpreting, as a lack of observance, that which was in truth due to *something of state*' (Furness).

155. *Toy.* 'Trifle,' 'whim,' 'fancy.'

Concerning you.
Des. Alas the day! I never gave him cause.
Emil. But jealous souls will not be answer'd so;
They are not ever jealous for the cause,
But jealous for they are jealous: 't is a monster
Begot upon itself, born on itself.
Des. Heaven keep that monster from Othello's mind!
Emil. Lady, amen.
Des. I will go seek him.—Cassio, walk hereabout;
If I do find him fit, I 'll move your suit
And seek to effect it to my uttermost.
Cas. I humbly thank your ladyship.
[*Exeunt Desdemona and Emilia.*

Enter BIANCA.

Bian. 'Save you, friend Cassio!
Cas. What make you from home?
How is it with you, my most fair Bianca?
Indeed, sweet love, I was coming to your house.
Bian. And I was going to your lodging, Cassio.
What, keep a week away? seven days and nights?

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158. *Will not be answer'd so.* Will not be satisfied with that defence.

159-60. *They are not ... for they are jealous.* 'They are not always jealous because there is some reason, but jealous because they are jealous, i. e., because it is their nature to be so.' (Deighton).

160-1. *'Tis a monster ... itself.* See note on III. iii. 166, pp. 115-7.

168. *'Save you* — a form of greeting common in Shakespeare's day.

What make you from home? What do you, away from home?

172. *Keep a week away!* Rymer's criticisms, full of obtuse ferocity, are always a treat of buffoonery to the reader. One can but smile, for instance, when the critic pronounces his verdict that *in Othello* — which he considers the best of Shakespeare's tragedies — there is "some burlesque, some humour and ramble of comical wit, some show and some mimicry to divert the spectators: but the tragical part is plainly none other than a bloody farce, without salt or savour;" or that in it the poet's "brains are turned; he raves and rambles without any coherence, any spark of reason, or any rule to control him or set bounds to his phrensy;" or when, speaking of Portia, he says, 'she is scarce one remove from a

Eight score eight hours? and lovers' absent hours, 173
More tedious than the dial eight score times?
Oh, weary reckoning!
Cas. Pardon me, Bianca;
I have this while with leaden thoughts been press'd,
But I shall in a more continuate time 177
Strike off this score of absence. Sweet Bianca,
[*Giving her Desdemona's handkerchief.*
Take me this work out.
Bian. Oh, Cassio, whence came this?
This is some token from a newer friend; 180
To the felt absence now I feel a cause.
Is 't come to this? Well, well.

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natural, she is own cousin-german, of one piece, the very same impertinent flesh and blood with Desdemona." Our mirth however changes to pity when we hear the helpless cry he utters in trying to understand the duration of time.— "This Third Act begins in the morning, at noon she drops the Handkerchief, after dinner she misses it, and then follows all this outrage and horrible clutter about it. If we believe a small Damosel, in the last scene of this Act, this day is effectually seven days. Our Poet is at this plunge, that whether this Act contains the compass of one day, of seven days, or of seven years, or of all together, the repugnance and the absurdity would be the same." Yes, it is a puzzle, and it has puzzled better heads than Rymer's these three hundred years. The solution will be found in the Exposition.

172-4. The construction is as follows: 'What! (was it kind of you to) keep away (for) a week?—seven days and nights?—eight score eight hours?—(and those, too,) lovers' absent hours, more tedious than the dial eight score times?'

173. *Lovers' absent hours ... times.* 'Hours of separation between lovers, which in calculation seem to them so much longer than those told by the clock.' (Deighton).

176. *Leaden thoughts.* Heavy, sorrowful thoughts.

177. *Continuate.* Unbroken, uninterrupted (by cares). Cf. *T. of A.* I. i. 11: 'continuate goodness.'

178. *Score of absence.* 'A punning allusion to Bianca's *eight score*' (Delius).

179. *Take me this work out.* Copy this work for me. Cf. III. iii. 296.

181. *To the felt absence.* To the absence which tried me so sorely. 'Here the word *to* includes the double effect of *in addition to* and *for*.' (The Cowden-Clarkes).

Cas. Go to, woman!
Throw your vile guesses in the devil's teeth,
From whence you have them. You are jealous now
That this is from some mistress, some remembrance:
No, in good troth, Bianca.
Bian. Why, whose is it?
Cas. I know not neither; I found it in my chamber.
I like the work well; ere it be demanded—
As like enough it will — I 'd have it copied:
Take it, and do 't; and leave me for this time.
Bian. Leave you! wherefore?
Cas. I do attend here on the general;
And think it no addition, nor my wish,
To have him see me woman'd.
Bian. Why, I pray you?
Cas. Not that I love you not.
Bian. But that you do not love me.
I pray you, bring me on the way a little,
And say if I shall see you soon at night.
Cas. 'T is but a little way that I can bring you,
For I attend here; but I 'll see you soon.
Bian. 'T is very good; I must be circumstanc'd.
[*Exeunt.*

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193. *Addition.* 'Credit', 'recommendation.'

Woman'd. In the company of (talking to) a woman — impliedly, a mistress.

195. *But that you do not love me.* Bianca's pun does not seem to be generally understood. Hanmer spoils it by his emendation, '*Nor that you love me.*' Bianca retorts by wilfully mistaking Cassio as having said '*Not that I love you*, — *not* (that).'

196. *Bring me on the way a little.* Escort (accompany) me part of my way home.

197. *Soon at night.* 'This very night, so early as to-day in the evening.' (Schmidt).

199. *Soon.* 'At *nightfall*' (Furness).

200. *'Tis very good.* 'Very well (said with bitterness), I must yield to circumstances.' (Deighton).

ACT IV.

Scene I. *Cyprus. Before the Castle.*

Enter Othello *and* Iago.

Iago. Will you think so?
Oth. Think so, Iago?
Iago. What,
To kiss in private?
Oth. An unauthoriz'd kiss?
Iago. Or to be naked with her friend in bed,
An hour, or more, not meaning any harm?
Oth. Naked in bed, Iago, and not mean harm?
It is hypocrisy against the devil;

1-30. The drift of this conversation cannot be understood unless the mental condition of Othello has been rightly followed, and the previous conversation between Othello and Iago rightly imagined. Warburton supposes that Iago has been "*applying cases of false comfort* to Othello; as that though the parties had been even found in bed together, there might be no harm done; it might be only for the trial of their virtue." Some annotators suspect a mistake in the distribution of the speeches and the arrangement of the lines. The text is, however, perfect as it is, and if it is unintelligible on the surface, the fault is in the superficiality of the student. The meaning is fully brought out in the Exposition. It can only be hinted here that Othello had, after a good deal of mental struggle, dismissed the matter of the handkerchief from his thoughts and begun to hope that Cassio's talk in his sleep might be a mere dream after all. He would not however be satisfied with that view unless his honest friend agreed with him; so he put it to him and would have been glad to have his peace of mind restored. Iago would of course do his best to save his friend from agony; so he says: "Well, that's not a bad view at all; and even if they had gone the length of kissing each other in private, I should think it were on serious fault. *Will you think so?* Oth. Do you ask me if I *think so, Iago?* Iago. *What!* do you think it a fault, even *to kiss in private?* Oth. Isn't it a fault, *an unauthorised kiss?* Iago (continuing his former question) — *or to be naked, etc.?*

2. *Unauthoriz'd.* Not sanctioned by social etiquette.

6. *Hypocrisy against the devil.* 'Hypocrisy to cheat the devil ... by giving him flattering hopes, and at last avoiding the crime which he

They that mean virtuously and yet do so,
The devil their virtue tempts, and they tempt heaven.

Iago. If they do nothing, 't is a venial slip;
But if I give my wife a handkerchief,—

Oth. What then?

Iago. Why, then, 't is hers, my lord; and, being hers,
She may, I think, bestow 't on any man.

Oth. She is protectress of her honour too;
May she give that?

Iago. Her honour is an essence that 's not seen;
They have it very oft that have it not:
But, for the handkerchief,—

Oth. By heaven, I would most gladly have forgot it.
Thou said'st—oh, it comes o'er my memory,
As doth the raven o'er the infected house,
Boding to all — he had my handkerchief.

Iago. Ay, what of that?

Oth. That's not so good now.

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thinks them ready to commit' (Johnson).

8. *The devil ... heaven.* 'The devil tempts their virtues by stirring up their passions, and they tempt heaven by placing themselves in such a situation as makes it scarcely possible to avoid falling, by gratification of them' (Henley).

9. *If they ... venial slip.* Provided they commit no actual crime, it would be a pardonable error to tempt heaven in that way.

16. *Essence.* Abstract quality, intangible thing.

17. *They have ... not.* Many pass for virtuous women who are not.

21. *The infected house.* House infected with plague or disease. *Infected* is the quarto reading; the folio has *infectious.* The allusion is to the superstition, still prevalent in many parts of the world, that the raven's croak over or near a sick house predicts death. Malone quotes Marlowe's *Jew of Malta,* II. i:

> "Thus like the sad presaging raven, that tolls
> The sick man's passport in her hollow beak,
> And in the shadow of the silent night,
> Does shake contagion from her sable wings."

22. *Boding to all.* Foreboding evil to all the inmates.

23. *That's not so good now.* On this, Purnell remarks: 'Iago would attach no importance to that. Othello says that that is unlike his usual

Iago. What,
If I had said I had seen him do you wrong?
Or heard him say, — as knaves be such abroad,
Who having, by their own importunate suit,
Or voluntary dotage of some mistress, 27
Convincèd or supplied them, cannot choose
But they must blab—
Oth. Hath he said any thing?
Iago. He hath, my lord; but be you well assur'd,
No more than he 'll unswear.
Oth. What hath he said?
Iago. Why, that he did — I know not what he did.
Oth. What? What?
Iago. Lie—
Oth. With her?
Iago. With her, on her, what you will. 33
Oth. Lie with her? lie on her? We say lie on her,

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wisdom.' Purnell is clearly wrong. Iago is trying to upset Othello by reminding him of the handkerchief, but outwardly he pretends to attach no importance to it and says: 'Ay, what of that?—what if he had your handkerchief?' Othello pauses for a few seconds and gladly accepts Iago's view, saying: 'Yes, now it is not so good, as a proof of their guilt.' Iago perceives that the ground is slipping from under his feet and makes a bold effort to save the situation and says: 'What, if I had said I had seen him do you wrong?' &c. This is fully explained in the Exposition.

27. *Voluntary dotage*, i. e., her own fond solicitation.

28. *Convinced.* Overcome. *Supplied* — gratified. Cf. *M. for M.* V. i. 212: 'this is the body That took away the match from Isabel, And did supply thee at thy garden-house In her imagin'd person.'

34-42. 'Here, as in *Lear,* IV. vi. 127, the highest passion of all, as Abbot (§ 511) says, is expressed in prose. Compare ll. 175 et seq. of this Scene' (Furness). Pope describes this soliloquy (of which lines 37-42 are not found in Q1) as trash, and it may be interesting to know that Pope considered Rymer, 'on the whole, one of the best critics we ever had!' The Cowden-Clarkes remark: 'This speech, composed entirely of abrupt and incoherent words, disjointed phrases, and unconnected exclamations, wrung from the depths of a soul immersed in images of the most revolting and poignantly distressing kind, affords a notable instance of Shakespeare's might in producing powerful impressions through imperfect expression.'

when they belie her. Lie with her: that 's fulsome. Handkerchief: confessions: handkerchief. To confess, and be hang'd for his labour. First, to be hang'd, and then to confess: I tremble at it. Nature would not invest herself in such shadowing passion without some instruction. It is not words that shakes me thus, —

35. *When they belie her.* That is, when they lie about her (speak falsely of her). So, Othello disposes of one of the confessions *(lie on her)*; but the other *(lie with her)* is fulsome and proves the offence to his mind.

36-7. *To confess and be hang'd.* An old proverbial saying. Malone quotes Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*, IV. i., 'Blame not us, but the proverb, — Confess and be hanged.' Cf. *T. of A.* I. ii. 22. 'Ho, ho! confess'd it! hang'd it, have you not?'

37-8. *First, to be hang'd and then to confess: I tremble at it.* This refers to Desdemona, not to Cassio. Othello had already tried to get a confession from her about the handkerchief, but failed. Now, in his burning wrath, he tells himself that the only way to get her to confess is to hang (torture) her in the first instance. Cassio's course was *to confess and be hang'd for his labour.* But Desdemona's course should needs be, *first, to be hang'd* and then to confess. [Othello indeed tries again at night to obtain her confession]. This cruel idea of extorting the gentle lady's confession summons her before his mind. A veritable halter on her neck! — ha! the coming event foreshadowed! He *trembles at it.* It sends a shudder through his body, his intellect grows dim and misty; he feels that the change creeping over him cannot be the result of mere emotion and excitement, *without some instruction,* some communication from unseen intelligence which sends the horrible truth home to his soul. Sure, this severe shaking — this ecstasy and shivering which overpower him — couldn 't be due to the fury of his *words. Pish!* his *nostrils* [noses — the final *s* is probably the result of the tremor in his speech] vibrate violently, his *ears* ring with sounds, his *lips* quiver. His speech is failing fast, his consciousness is fading away, and he feels as if he was going to faint — *is it possible?* He hastily demands Desdemona to *confess* about the *handkerchief*, but she is mute. Oh, she is false, "false as hell!" He can only curse her and call her a *devil* before he sinks into the swoon which brings him down. This, briefly, is the process which leads to Othello's fainting. It will be explained more fully in the Exposition. Editors generally spoil the train of thought by inserting too many dashes in the text. The punctuation given above follows the folio.

39-40. *Shadowing passion ... instruction.* The Collier MS. has "*shuddering* passion" which agrees very well with the trembling and the subsequent swooning. But retaining '*shadowing*,' the word means 'clouding, darkening the intellect,' not as Schmidt interprets, 'full of shapes and images of things.' Johnson explains the passage as follows;

pish !—noses, ears, and lips: is 't possible ? Confess !
handkerchief ! — O devil ! [*Falls in a trance.*

Iago. Work on, 43
My medicine, work! Thus credulous fools are caught:
And many worthy and chaste dames even thus,
All guiltless, meet reproach.—What, ho ! my lord !
My lord, I say ! Othello !

Enter CASSIO.

How now, Cassio !

Cas. What 's the matter ?

"This passion, which spreads its clouds over me, is the effect of some agency more than the operation of words ; it is one those notices which men have of unseen calamities." Warburton considers '*instruction*' a ridiculous blunder for '*induction*,' and says: "Othello is just going to fall into a swoon ; and, as is common for people in that circumstance, feels an unusual mist and darkness, accompanied with horror, coming upon him. This, with vast sublimity of thought, is compared to the season of the sun's eclipse, at which time the earth becomes shadowed by the *induction* or bringing over of the moon between it and the sun. This being the allusion, the reasoning stands thus, My nature could never be thus overshadowed, and falling, as it were, into dissolution for no cause. There must be an *induction* of something; there must be a real cause. My jealousy cannot be merely imaginary. Ideas, *words* only, could not shake me thus, and raise all this disorder. My jealousy must be grounded, therefore, on matter of fact." But, whatever the value of the critic's *induction*, we miss the *conduction* of his erudition to the remainder of the speech whose "starts and broken reflections," he notes with evident admiration, "have something very terrible, and show the mind of the speaker in inexpressible agonies."

40. *Shakes.* Cf. I. i. 171, iii. 283 ; II. i. 28 ; III. iii. 350 ; IV. i. 66, 120.

41. *Noses, ears, lips.* Steevens says : "Othello is imagining to himself the familiarities which he supposes to have passed between Cassio and his wife. If this be not the meaning, we must suppose he is meditating a cruel punishment for the guilty lovers." And he compares *W. T.* I. ii. 285 :

"Is whispering nothing ?
Is leaning cheek to cheek ? is meeting noses ?
Kissing with inside lip ?" etc.—

and he might also have cited line 137 in support of his interpretation ! It need hardly be remarked that Steevens has betrayed a very poor conception of the terrible agitation and tremor which brought about the general's swooning.

Iago. My lord is fall'n into an epilepsy:
This is his second fit; he had one yesterday.
Cas. Rub him about the temples.
Iago. No, forbear;
The lethargy must have his quiet course:
If not, he foams at mouth, and by and by
Breaks out to savage madness. Look, he stirs:
Do you withdraw yourself a little while,
He will recover straight; when he is gone,
I would on great occasion speak with you. [*Exit Cassio.*
How is it, general? have you not hurt your head?
Oth. Dost thou mock me?
Iago. I mock you not, by heaven.
Would you would bear your fortune like a man!
Oth. A hornèd man 's a monster and a beast.
Iago. There 's many a beast then in a populous city,
And many a civil monster.
Oth. Did he confess it?
Iago. Good sir, be a man;
Think every bearded fellow that 's but yok'd
May draw with you. There 's millions now alive
That nightly lie in those unproper beds

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50. *He had one yesterday.* Of course, a lie.

52. *His quiet course.* 'His' for '*its.*'

57. *On great occasion.* On a very important matter.

59. *Dost thou mock me?* 'As if Iago had meant the hurt done to the head when one is made a horned monster' (Hunter). Rather, as if Iago had asked him if he had not by the fall hurt his head, which had horns!

63. *Civil.* A pun, implying 'living in the city' as well as 'civilized,' 'passing for a gentleman.' Cf. *Cymb.* III. vi. 23: 'Ho, who's here? If any thing that's civil, speak; if savage, Take or lend.'

65. *Bearded.* 'i. e., old enough to have a beard, and hence to be a husband.'

66. *Draw with you.* Be your companion; be your 'yoke-fellow.' Cf. *Hen. V.* II. iii. 56.

67. *Unproper.* 'Not peculiar to an individual, common' (Dyce). A pun, implying '*improper,*' immoral,

Which they dare swear peculiar; your case is better.
Oh, 't is the spite of hell, the fiend's arch-mock,
To lip a wanton in a secure couch,
And to suppose her chaste! No, let me know;
And knowing what I am, I know what she shall be.

Oth. Oh, thou art wise; 't is certain.

Iago. Stand you awhile apart;
Confine yourself but in a patient list.
Whilst you were here o'erwhelmed with your grief—
A passion most unsuiting such a man—
Cassio came hither: I shifted him away,
And laid good 'scuse upon your ecstasy,
Bade him anon return and here speak with me;
The which he promis'd. Do but encave yourself,
And mark the fleers, the gibes, and notable scorns,

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68. *Peculiar.* Their own. Cf. I. i. 60 and III. iii. 79.

69. *Spite.* 'malice.'

The fiend's arch-mock — the devil's bitterest mockery.

70. *Lip.* Kiss.

Secure. Free from suspicion. (L. *securus*, without care). 'In a couch on which he is lulled into a false security' (Malone). Cf. III. iii. 198.

71-2. *No, let me know ... shall be.* Iago says: 'No, I cannot put up with the fiend's mockery. Let it come to my knowledge that my wife has been disloyal to me, let me know if I am a cuckold, a horned man, and, to be sure, I know what the wretch shall be, what shall become of her, what I should do with her.' Iago shudders to think of the devil's arch-mockery which keeps so many husbands in utter ignorance of their wives' misconduct and flatters them with a fancied security. Possibly, he is himself a cuckold but does not know it! Oh, if he could only know it, his course was settled; *he* knew very well what he should do with the strumpet of his wife. Iago says this to indirectly exasperate Othello against Desdemona whose unchastity has fortunately (and therein his lot was 'better' than that of other husbands) come to his knowledge.

74. *In a patient list.* 'Within the bounds of patience.'

76. *Unsuiting.* This is the reading of the first quarto. The folio has '*resulting*,' evidently a misprint.

77. *Shifted him away.* Contrived to send him away.

78. *Ecstasy.* 'Fit of strong emotion'; swoon.

80. *Encave yourself.* 'Withdraw to some hiding place.'

81. *Fleers.* Mocks. *Notable scorns* — Open expressions of scorn.

That dwell in every region of his face;
For I will make him tell the tale anew,
Where, how, how oft, how long ago, and when
He hath, and is again to cope your wife:
I say, but mark his gesture. Marry, patience;
Or I shall say you are all in all in spleen,
And nothing of a man.

Oth. Dost thou hear, Iago?
I will be found most cunning in my patience;
But — dost thou hear? — most bloody.

Iago. That 's not amiss;
But yet keep time in all. Will you withdraw?
[*Othello retires.*
Now will I question Cassio of Bianca,
A housewife that by selling her desires
Buys herself bread and clothes. It is a creature
That dotes on Cassio, (as 't is the strumpet's plague
To beguile many and be beguil'd by one).
He, when he hears of her, cannot refrain
From the excess of laughter.—Here he comes.—

Re-enter CASSIO.

As he shall smile, Othello shall go mad;
And his unbookish jealousy must construe
Poor Cassio's smiles, gestures, and light behaviour,
Quite in the wrong.—How do you now, lieutenant?

Cas. The worser that you give me the addition
Whose want even kills me.

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85. *Cope.* Meet, encounter.

87. *All in all in spleen.* All choler; 'wholly plunged in wrath.'

94. *It is.* 'Used contemptuously' (Rolfe).

100. *Unbookish jealousy.* That is, jealousy which has not the advantage and safeguard of learning and experience to enable it to construe things properly. Cf. I. i. 23, 'bookish theoric' which means theory learnt from books, not from practical experience. '*Unbookish*' does not mean 'practical' but implies incapacity to theorise and argue correctly.

103. *Give me the addition.* Address me by the title.

Iago. Ply Desdemona well, and you are sure on 't.
Now, if this suit lay in Bianca's power, 106
How quickly should you speed!
Cas. Alas, poor caitiff!
Oth. Look, how he laughs already!
Iago. I never knew woman love man so. 109
Cas. Alas, poor rogue! I think, indeed, she loves me.
Oth. Now he denies it faintly, and laughs it out.
Iago. Do you hear, Cassio?
Oth. Now he importunes him
To tell it o'er: go to; well said, well said. 113
Iago. She gives it out that you shall marry her;
Do you intend it?
Cas. Ha, ha, ha!
Oth. Do you triumph, Roman! do you triumph! 116
Cas I marry — what? — a customer! Prithee, bear

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105. *Ply.* Use diligently (as if she were in his power!)

106. *Bianca's power.* This is the quarto reading. The folio has 'Bianca's *dower*,' which, as Collier has pointed out, is a typographical error, due to the turning up of '*p*.' Knight, however, upholds *dower*, explaining it as 'gift,' and Delius thinks that it accords better with what Iago afterwards insinuates, viz: 'she gives it out that you shall marry her.' Oh, the dower of an upturned 'p' in power!

107. *Speed.* Succeed. *Caitiff.* Used playfully, out of fondness. Cf. 'rogue' in l. 110 and 'wretch' in III. iii. 90. Shakespeare uses 'caitiff', of both sexes.

111. *Laughs it out.* 'Treats it as a matter for merriment;' 'brazens it out with laughter' (Deighton).

113. *Well said.* Well done. See note on II. i. 167.

116. *Do you triumph, Roman!* According to Warburton who is an adept in discovering 'ridiculous' blunders, *Roman* should be added to the list. He says: 'Shakespeare wrote '*rogue*,' which, being obscurely written, the editors mistook for *Rome*, and so made *Roman* of it.' Johnson, however, has a more humble explanation to give: "Othello calls him *Roman* ironically. *Triumph*, which was a Roman ceremony, brought *Roman* into his thoughts. 'What!' says he, 'you are now triumphing as great as a Roman?'" Rather, as I would put it, Go on, go on triumphing like a Roman! Cf. *A. Y. L.* IV. ii. 3: 'Let's present him to the Duke, like a Roman conqueror.'

117. *Customer.* 'A common woman, one that invites custom' (Johnson). White remarks: 'Both Iago and Cassio are led by the

Some charity to my wit; do not think it
So unwholesome. Ha, ha, ha!

Oth. So, so, so, so; they laugh that wins.

Iago. Why, the cry goes that you shall marry her.

Cas. Prithee, say true.

Iago. I am a very villain else.

Oth. Have you scor'd me? Well.

Cas. This is the monkey's own giving out;
She is persuaded I will marry her,
Out of her own love and flattery, not out of my promise.

Oth. Iago beckons me; now he begins the story.

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occasion to make out Bianca worse, or at least lower in condition, than she was.' [Cassio merely refers to the fact of her belonging to a disreputable class and does not mean to say that she is pursuing the trade.]

119. *Unwholesome.* 'Unsound,' 'defective.'

123. *Have you scor'd me?* Steevens, Staunton and the Cowden-Clarkes take this as meaning, 'Have you *branded* me with a mark of disgrace?', 'set a mark of infamy upon me'—'given me horns?' Johnson and Schmidt explain it as signifying, 'Have you made out my reckoning? Have you settled the term of my life?' Delius says: "Othello applies to Desdemona Iago's words, 'you shall marry her,' and asks, 'Have you made out my reckoning? Are you finished with me?' it is not until Othello is out of the way that a marriage with her is possible. Hudson thinks the meaning may be, 'Have you run up an account against me which I must pay? very well, I'll see you paid'—or it may be, 'Have you squared the account with me for cashiering you?' Collier doubts if *scor'd* is the true lection. Who shall decide when doctors disagree? May I take the liberty of saying that all these interpretations are random guesses, quite beside the mark? Othello is overhearing the conversation between Iago and Cassio, as best he can from his hiding place, and the words which he mutters to himself are not a running commentary on what reaches his ears, but the outward expression of his excited feelings which he controls with very great effort. Cassio's laughter and merriment cut him to the quick and he says with a threatening nod, "Do you triumph, Roman! do you triumph! You shall soon see an end to it." Again, a boisterous '*ha! ha! ha!*' and Othello feels completely crest-fallen and says, "So, so, so, so—they laugh that win." He scarcely cares to note the conversation which continues; his feelings keep burning over the idea of Cassio's victory which gave him reason to laugh and be merry; he bites his lip and continues his muttering: "Have you scored me? Have you made your score and won against me, that you laugh so? Have you won a victory over me? Well—there shall be an end to it!

Cas. She was here even now; she haunts me in every place. I was the other day talking on the sea-bank with certain Venetians; and thither comes the bauble, and falls me thus about my neck—

Oth. Crying 'O dear Cassio!' as it were; his gesture imports it.

Cas. So hangs, and lolls, and weeps upon me;
So shakes and pulls me: ha, ha, ha!

Oth. Now he tells how she plucked him to my chamber.—Oh, I see that nose of yours, but not that dog I shall throw it to.

Cas. Well, I must leave her company.

Iago. Before me! look, where she comes.

Enter BIANCA.

Cas. 'T is such another fitchew! marry, a perfumed one.—
What do you mean by this haunting of me?

Bian. Let the devil and his dam haunt you! What did you mean by that same handkerchief you gave me even now? I was a fine fool to take it. I must take out the work?—A likely piece of work, that you should

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129. *The other day.* 'long time' (The Cowden-Clarkes). Of course!

131. *Falls me.* 'Ethical dative' (Abbott § 220). Cf. I. i. 48.

134. *Lolls.* 'Leans lovingly.'

135. *Shakes.* This is the folio reading. The quarto reading is '*hales.*'

137-8. *That nose ... throw it to.* 'I see your nose, which I shall soon tear from your face, and fling to the first dog that comes in my way' (Deighton).

140. *Before me.* 'By my soul' (Schmidt). Cf. *T. N.* II. iii. 194: 'Before me, she's a good wench.'

141. *'Tis such another fitchew.* 'A very fitchew that she is' (Deighton). *Fitchew* is 'pole-cat'; hence, a wanton woman. '*'Tis such another*' is an idiomatic waggish phrase' (The Cowden-Clarkes). Cf. *M. W.* I. iv. 160: 'good faith, it is such another Nan.'

146. *Even now.* The Cowden-Clarkes call attention to this and '*to-night*' in lines 154 and 175, as indications of 'short time.' What else can they indicate, referring as they do to the same day?

147. *A likely piece of work.* A likely story to believe. (Ironical).

find it in your chamber, and know not who left it there! This is some minx's token, and I must take out the work? There, give it your hobby-horse; wheresoever you had it, I 'll take out no work on 't.

Cas. How now, my sweet Bianca! how now! how now!

Oth. By heaven, that should be my handkerchief!

Bian. If you 'll come to supper to-night, you may; if you will not, come when you are next prepar'd for. [*Exit.*

Iago. After her, after her.

Cas. I must; she 'll rail in the streets else.

Iago. Will you sup there?

Cas. Yes, I intend so.

Iago. Well, I may chance to see you; for I would very fain speak with you.

Cas. Prithee, come; will you?

Iago. Go to; say no more. [*Exit Cassio.*

Oth. [*Advancing*] How shall I murther him, Iago?

Iago. Did you perceive how he laughed at his vice?

Oth. Oh, Iago!

Iago. And did you see the handkerchief?

Oth. Was that mine?

Iago. Yours, by this hand; and to see how he prizes the foolish woman your wife! she gave it him, and he hath given it his whore.

Oth. I would have him nine years a-killing. — A fine woman! a fair woman! a sweet woman!

Iago. Nay, you must forget that.

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150. *Hobby-horse.* A contemptuous term for a wanton fellow or an abandoned woman; here means 'favourite mistress.'

155. *When you are next prepar'd for.* A threat that she will never more have supper prepared for him.

169. *By this hand.* A form of asseveration — the idea being that he shall lose that hand if he is not speaking the truth.

172. *A-killing.* In the act of killing. Cf. V. ii: 'If he says so, may his pernicious soul Rot half a grain a day!'

Oth. Ay, let her rot, and perish, and be damned to-night; for she shall not live. No, my heart is turned to stone; I strike it, and it hurts my hand.—Oh, the world hath not a sweeter creature; she might lie by an emperor's side and command him tasks.

Iago. Nay, that 's not your way.

Oth. Hang her! I do but say what she is; so delicate with her needle! an admirable musician! Oh! she will sing the savageness out of a bear! of so high and plenteous wit and invention!

Iago. She 's the worse for all this.

Oth. Oh, a thousand thousand times; — and then, of so gentle a condition!

Iago. Ay, too gentle.

Oth. Nay, that's certain;—but yet the pity of it, Iago! O Iago, the pity of it, Iago!

Iago. If you are so fond over her iniquity, give her patent to offend; for, if it touch not you, it comes near nobody.

Oth. I will chop her into messes! cuckold me!

Iago. Oh, 't is foul in her.

Oth. With mine officer!

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183. *Sing the savageness out of a bear.* Cf. *V. & A.* 1096:

> "To recreate himself when he hath sung,
> The tiger would be tame and gently hear him."

184. *Wit.* Understanding.

Invention. Schmidt explains this as 'mental activity in general.' I think it refers rather to her imaginative faculty, probably with special reference to her ability to produce *impromptu* music.

187. *Condition.* Disposition. Cf. II. i. 251.

188. *Ay, too gentle.* In a bad sense: that is, 'too pliant, too ready to yield to admirers.'

191. *Fond.* Foolish; foolishly lenient.

192. *Give her patent to offend.* Give her formal permission and exclusive privilege to offend. A hit at 'the *patents of monopoly*, which Queen Elizabeth and King James had so frequently granted, and so often retracted' (Chalmers). Malone compares *King Edward III.*, 1596: 'Why then give sin a passport to offend.'

Iago. That 's fouler.

Oth. Get me some poison, Iago, this night: — I 'll not expostulate with her, lest her body and beauty unprovide my mind again: — this night, Iago.

Iago. Do it not with poison; strangle her in her bed, even the bed she hath contaminated.

Oth. Good, good! the justice of it pleases; very good!

Iago. And for Cassio, let me be his undertaker; you shall hear more by midnight.

Enter LODOVICO, DESDEMONA, *and* Attendants.

Oth. Excellent good! — [*A trumpet within.*] What trumpet is that same?

Iago. I warrant something from Venice,—
'Tis Lodovico, this, comes from the Duke.
See, — your wife's with him.

Lod. 'Save you, worthy general!

Oth. With all my heart, sir.

Lod. The duke and the senators of Venice greet you. [*Gives him a letter.*

Oth. I kiss the instrument of their pleasures. [*Opens the letter, and reads.*

Des. And what 's the news, good cousin Lodovico?

Iago. I am very glad to see you, signior;
Welcome to Cyprus.

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200. *Unprovide.* 'Unfit, deprive me of resolution' (Rolfe).

204. *Let me be his undertaker.* I undertake to dispose of him — (with a punning reference to the present meaning of 'undertaker').

210. 'Save you — God save you, i. e., keep you safe and well.

With all my heart, sir. An elliptical reply to Lodovico's salutation: 'I return your greeting with all my heart, sir.' There is however a pun implied on the special applicability of Lodovico's salutation to the troubled condition of Othello's mind: 'I thank you, sir, with all my heart for your blessing.' Cf. *T. of A.* III. vi., where the phrase occurs as a salutation: 'With all my heart, gentlemen both' — I greet you with all my heart, etc.

212. *The instrument of their pleasures.* 'That by which they convey their wishes to me' (Deighton).

[*Opens the letter and reads*]. Note the time is *Sunday evening*.

Lod. I thank you. How does Lieutenant Cassio?
Iago. Lives, sir. 217
Des. Cousin, there's fall'n between him and my lord
An unkind breach; but you shall make all well.
Oth. Are you sure of that?
Des. My lord?
Oth. [*Reads*] 'This fail you not to do, as you will—'
Lod. He did not call; he 's busy in the paper. 223
Is there division 'twixt my lord and Cassio?
Des. A most unhappy one; I would do much
To atone them, for the love I bear to Cassio. 226
Oth. Fire and brimstone!
Des. My lord?
Oth. Are you wise?
Des. What, is he angry?
Lod. May be the letter mov'd him;
For, as I think, they do command him home, 229
Deputing Cassio in his government.

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217. *Lives sir.* Hinting that all was not well with him — said in an undertone.

219. *An unkind breach.* A breach which has resulted in unkindness to Cassio.

222. *'This fail you not to do, as you will —'* Q. What is this about?

224. *Division.* Breach, misunderstanding.

226. *Atone.* 'Bring them *at one*, reconcile.' (Rolfe).

227. *Are you wise?* Fechter in acting gave these words to Iago, 'directing him to seize the arm of Othello across the table and stop him violently;' and Furness, much as he dislikes 'the Porte St. Martin, or Bowery, style of Fechter's Othello,' confesses that the change is worthy of consideration. Furness has been deceived into charity. After the explosion of 'fire and brimstone', Othello cools down and asks Desdemona, '*Are you wise?*' — Are you not mad (that you talk of your *love* to Cassio)? A minute afterwards he says, 'I am glad to see you mad.'

229-30. *They do command him home.* Theobald here utters a piteous cry which is echoed by almost every critic and commentator: "Othello is but just arrived at Cyprus; the Senate could hardly yet have heard of the Ottoman fleet being scattered by the tempest; and Othello is at once remanded home, without any imputation suggested on his conduct, or any hint of his being employed on a more urgent Commission. Tis true, the deputation of Cassio in his room seems designed to heighten the Moor's

Des. Trust me, I am glad on 't.
Oth. Indeed!
Des. My lord?
Oth. I am glad to see you mad.
Des. Why, sweet Othello!
Oth. [*Striking her*] Devil!
Des. I have not deserv'd this.
Lod. My lord, this would not be believ'd in Venice,
Though I should swear I saw 't. 'T is very much;
Make her amends: she weeps.
Oth. O devil, devil!
If that the earth could teem with woman's tears,
Each drop she falls would prove a crocodile.
Out of my sight!

---

resentment; but some probable reason should have been assigned for his recall. As to what Iago says afterwards, that Othello is to go to Mauritania, this is only a lie of his own invention to carry his point with Roderigo." The difficulty will be cleared in the Exposition.

232. *I am glad to see you mad.* The Cowden-Clarkes remark: "We cannot help thinking that the author probably wrote, 'I am *mad* to see you *glad*.' But we have not ventured to alter the text; because Othello's reply, as it stands, allows the meaning to be understood of 'I am glad to see you unwise', in reference to his having asked, 'Are you wise?'" The editors have agreed well and wisely in respecting the text: thinking does not do much harm, so it leads not to action. Othello is *glad* to see Desdemona mad, because by her mad utterance she has as good as confessed her guilt.

233. [*Striking her*]. 'This blow is the ineffaceable blot, in Othello's history which leaves, upon me at least, a more painful impression than even the smothering. This, is simply the rage of a coward; that, is an act of supposed justice. Fechter strikes with the letter which he holds; this is a shade better than the blackhanded blow which Salvini delivers full on those sweet lips, and which makes your own lips grow white as death at the sight.' (Furness). See l. 265.

238-9. *If that the earth ... crocodile.* 'If the earth could become fertile by means of woman's tears, if woman's tears could impregnate the earth, each drop she lets fall would generate (develop into) a crocodile — the most deceitful of animals whose own tears are proverbially fallacious.' Malone quotes Bullokar, who says in his *English Expositor:* "It is written that he will weep over a man's head when he hath devoured the body, and then will eat up the head too. Wherefore in Latin there

Des. I will not stay to offend you. [*Going.*
Lod. Truly, an obedient lady;
I do beseech your lordship, call her back.
Oth. Mistress!
Des. My lord?
Oth. What would you with her, sir?
Lod. Who, I, my lord?
Oth. Ay; you did wish that I would make her turn.
Sir, she can turn, and turn: and yet go on,
And turn again. And she can weep, sir, weep.
And she 's obedient: as you say, obedient.
Very obedient: proceed you in your tears.—
Concerning this, sir, — Oh, well-painted passion!—
I am commanded home. — Get you away;
I 'll send for you anon. — Sir, I obey the mandate,
And will return to Venice. — Hence, avaunt!—
[*Exit Desdemona.*
Cassio shall have my place. And, sir, to-night,
I do entreat that we may sup together.
You are welcome, sir, to Cyprus.—Goats and monkeys!
[*Exit.*
Lod. Is this the noble Moor whom our full senate
Call all in all sufficient? Is this the nature
Whom passion could not shake? whose solid virtue

---

is a proverbe, *crocodile lachrymæ*, crocodile's tears, to signifie such tears as are fained, and spent only with intent to deceive, or doe harm." For the transitive use of '*fall*', cf. *J. C.* IV. ii. 26: 'They fall their crests;' *M. N. D.* V. i. 143: 'Her mantle she did fall;' etc.

246. *She can turn and turn.* Implying that she is inconstant in her love.

249. *Proceed you in your tears.* Weep on, you crocodile.

250. *Oh, well-painted passion!* How well she feigns her grief!

256. *Goats and monkeys!* The import and pertinence of these words will be seen in the course of the Exposition.

258. *All in all sufficient.* Possessing pre-eminent worth equal to any occasion. Cf. I. iii. 224: 'of most allowed sufficiency.'

259. Whom — for '*which*'

The shot of accident nor dart of chance
Could neither graze nor pierce?

Iago. He is much changed.

Lod. Are his wits safe? is he not light of brain?

Iago. He 's that he is; I may not breathe my censure.
What he might be—if what he might he is not—
I would to heaven he were!

Lod. What, strike his wife!

Iago. 'Faith, that was not so well; yet would I knew
That stroke would prove the worst!

Lod. Is it his use?
Or did the letters work upon his blood,
And new-create this fault?

Iago. Alas, alas!
It is not honesty in me to speak
What I have seen and known. You shall observe him,

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260. *The shot of accident ... chance.* Theobald says: 'I cannot see, for my heart, the difference between the shot of *accident* and dart of *chance*. The words and things they imply, are purely synonymous;' and he is persuaded that Shakespeare wrote 'nor dart of *change*.' Heath explains: '*Accident* is commonly used to denote personal calamities; *chance*, to distinguish those in which we are involved in consequence of more general revolutions of fortune.' Johnson says: '*Accident* may be considered as the *act*, and *chance* as the *power* or *agency* of fortune; as, It was by *chance* that this *accident* befel me.'

261. *Graze* refers to 'the shot of accident' and *pierce*, to 'the dart of chance.'

262. *Safe.* Sound. 'Is he sane?'

263. *Censure.* Opinion, judgment. Cf. II. iii. 189.

264-5. *What he might be ... he were.* If he is not already, what he might be (hereafter), i. e., mad, I wish he were (mad), for that would furnish an excuse for his rude and unkind behaviour to his gentle wife.

267. *Use.* Habit, custom. Cf. *Ham.* III. iv. 168: 'For use can almost change the stamp of nature.' 'Use' in this line and 'what I have seen and known' in l. 271 are cited as indications of *long time*. And they are, of course.

268. *Work upon his blood*—excite his anger.

270. *It is not honesty.* It would not be proper and becoming. Cf. *Ham.* II. ii. 204: 'I hold it not honesty to have it thus set down.'

Speak—reveal.

And his own courses will denote him so
That I may save my speech; do but go after,
And mark how he continues.
Lod. I am sorry that I am deceiv'd in him. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II. *A Room in the Castle.*

Enter OTHELLO *and* EMILIA.

Oth. You have seen nothing then?
Emil. Nor ever heard, nor ever did suspect.
Oth. Yes, you have seen Cassio and she together.
Emil. But then I saw no harm, and then I heard
Each syllable that breath made up between them.
Oth. What, did they never whisper?
Emil. Never, my lord.
Oth. Nor send you out o' the way?
Emil. Never.
Oth. To fetch her fan, her gloves, her mask, nor nothing?
Emil. Never, my lord.

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272. *Courses.* Ways, conduct, behaviour.
Denote him. Disclose all about him.

SCENE II. — Malone points out the difficulty in ascertaining the place of this scene. Othello's words to Emilia, '*shut the door*' and his subsequent address to her as she goes out, point out a room in the castle. The entry of Iago and Roderigo, as well as Iago's words to Desdemona '*Go in, and weep not*', near the close of the scene, indicate an open court or verandah attached to the castle. The explanation is that the first part of the scene takes place inside the room and the latter part in a verandah adjoining it. After sending out Emilia to fetch her husband, Desdemona moves out into the verandah in expectation of Iago's arrival. Strictly speaking, a new scene must be marked at the interview with Iago, but as the same curtain was evidently used (here as elsewhere) to represent both the inside and outside of the apartment, Shakespeare continues the whole as one scene. See note on II. iii., p. 71 and on II. iii. 357.

2. *Nor ever heard ... suspect.* The Cowden-Clarkes have their usual note here about 'long time.'

Oth. That 's strange.
Emil. I durst, my lord, to wager she is honest,
Lay down my soul at stake : if you think other,
Remove your thought ; it doth abuse your bosom.
If any wretch have put this in your head,
Let heaven requite it with the serpent's curse !
For, if she be not honest, chaste, and true,
There 's no man happy ; the purest of their wives
Is foul as slander.
Oth. Bid her come hither ; go. [*Exit Emilia.*
She says enough ; yet she 's a simple bawd
That cannot say as much. This is a subtle whore,
A closet, lock and key, of villainous secrets :
And yet she 'll kneel and pray ; I have seen her do 't.

Enter DESDEMONA *with* EMILIA.

Des. My lord, what is your will ?
Oth. Pray, chuck, come hither.
Des. What is your pleasure ?
Oth. Let me see your eyes ;
Look in my face.
Des. What horrible fancy 's this ?
Oth. [*To Emilia*] Some of your function, mistress—
Leave procreants alone and shut the door.
Cough, or cry hem, if any body come :
Your mystery, your mystery ! Nay, dispatch. [*Exit Emil.*

16. *The serpent's curse.* The curse pronounced on the serpent for tempting Eve. See *Genesis,* III. 14, 15 : 'Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field ; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life : And I will put enmity between thee and the woman and between thy seed and her seed ; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.'

20. *Simple.* Stupid — opposite of 'subtle' in the next line.

22. *A closet, lock and key* — i. e., having both lock and key in itself.

23. *I have seen her do it.* Q. When and where ?

30. *Your mystery.* Editors generally take this separately and inter-

Des. Upon my knees, what doth your speech import?
I understand a fury in your words,
But not the words.
Oth. Why, what art thou?
Des. Your wife, my lord; your true and loyal wife.
Oth. Come, swear it, damn thyself; lest, being like one of heaven, the devils themselves should fear to seize thee. Therefore be double damn'd: swear thou art honest.
Des. Heaven doth truly know it.
Oth. Heaven truly knows that thou art false as hell.
Des. To whom, my lord? with whom? how am I false?
Oth. Ah, Desdemon! away! away! away!
Des. Alas the heavy day! Why do you weep?
Am I the motive of these tears, my lord?
If haply you my father do suspect
An instrument of this your calling back,
Lay not your blame on me; if you have lost him,
Why, I have lost him too.
Oth. Had it pleas'd heaven
To try me with affliction, had they rain'd

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pret it as 'Perform your *mystery* (trade, occupation);' but I think 'your mystery' here means '*your mysterious code* (language)' and refers to *coughing* or *crying hem*. The Cowden-Clarkes observe: "Othello taunts Emilia with having made a traffic in connivance at stolen meetings between Cassio and Desdemona, and now bids her give a specimen of her proficiency in her avocation; afterwards following up his insult by flinging her money for her 'pains.'"

36. *Like one of heaven.* Angelic in appearance. 'How exquisitely these few words serve to paint to us Desdemona's look of angelic purity and innocence, together with the impression it exercises upon even her husband's jaundiced sight!' (The Cowden-Clarkes).

37. *Double damn'd.* Doubly damned for being unchaste and for swearing falsely.

42. *Ah, Desdemon!* See note on III. i. 55.

44. *Motive.* Cause.

49. *They.* The heavenly powers. 'For *heaven* as a plural, Cf. *Rich. II.* I. ii. 6, *Macb.* II. i. 4, and *Ham.* III. iv. 173.' (Rolfe).

All kinds of sores and shames on my bare head,
Steep'd me in proverty to the very lips,
Given to captivity, me and my utmost hopes,
I should have found in some place of my soul
A drop of patience; but, alas, to make me
The fixèd figure for the time of scorn
To point his slow and moving finger at—
Yet could I bear that too, well, very well:

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50. *Sores and shames.* Afflictions and indignities. Cf. *Job*, ii. 7: 'So went Satan forth from the presence of the Lord, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown.'

Bare — defenceless.

55-6. *The fixèd figure ... finger at.* This is a passage which has puzzled the world of editors and annotators, and which Furness, after quoting their several emendations and interpretations, thinks "may be classed among those readings to which Steevens elsewhere refers as having hitherto disunited the opinions of the learned, and which 'will continue to disunite them as long as England and Shakespeare have a name.'" The reading given above is that of the folio. The 1st quarto has:

"A fixed figure, for the time of scorne,
To point his slow vnmouing fingers at — oh, oh,"

Various emendations have been proposed: such as, 'the *scorn* of *time*' (Malone), 'figure *of* the time, for scorn to point' (Hunter), '*hand* of scorn' (Collier), '*slowly moving* finger' (M. Mason), 'for the time, *in* scorn, To point his *sly* and *mocking* finger at' (Bailey), 'for the *rhymer's* scorn, To point his *foul* unmoving finger at' (Bulloch), etc.; and all manner of interpretations have been forced on 'the time of scorn,' 'slow and moving finger,' and 'slow unmoving finger.' Steevens says the idea is taken from a clock, and takes '*slow unmoving*' as meaning 'so slow that its motion is imperceptible' and explains the passage by paraphrasing it, 'To make me a fixed figure (on the dial of the world) for the hour of scorn to point and make a full stop at!' Malone points out that, in the clocks of the last age, there was in the middle of the dial-plate, a figure of Time, which, he believes, was probably in Shakespeare's thoughts when he wrote the passage in the text, and he points out too that scorn is personified in the 88th *Sonnet*, 'And place my merit in the eye of scorn,' and quotes the 104th *Sonnet* in support of *unmoving*.

"Ah! yet doth beauty, like a dial-hand,
Steal from his figure, and no pace perceiv'd;
So your sweet hue, which methinks still doth stand,
Hath motion, and mine eye may be deceiv'd."

Knight, however, says: "There is certainly the most extraordinary

[55-6. *The fixed figure for the time of scorn*, &c.]

confusion in Malone's interpretation; if the figure of Time be in the middle, the dial-hand points from it, and not at it, and there is nothing more remarkable in one numeral of a clock than in another. But why are we to have the notion of a clock at all? There is nothing whatever in the passage to warrant us in believing that the poet meant such a metaphor. By the 'fixed figure' we understand, literally, a living man exposed to public shame; or an effigy exhibited to a multitude, as Butler has it, 'To punish in *effigie* criminals.' By 'the time', we receive the same idea as in *Ham.* III. i. 70, where 'time' is used distinctly to express the *times*, the *age*. ... In the expression before us, then, the 'time of scorn' is the *age of scorn*. The 'slow finger' is the *pausing* finger, pointing at the fixed figure; but while it points it *moves in mockery*. Shakespeare was probably thinking of the *Digito Monstrari* of the ancients, and it may be, also, of the finger gesticulations of the Italians.' A fine fancy, this; but, the pity of it! it is Knight's, not Shakespeare's. The Cowden-Clarkes say: "We take the 'time of scorn' to be an impersonation of the scornful spirit of the epoch in which the speaker lives, including allusion to the image of Time which many ancient clocks bore; while the expression 'to point his slow, unmoving finger at' we think implies 'to point his finger, which generally moves slowly, unmovingly at me.' To our minds, the combination epithet, 'slow, unmoving,' serves exactly to describe the hand of a dial, with its onward-stealing yet apparently still finger; so that, in every way, the idea of the clock is presented to the imagination by this passage." Rolfe remarks: "That Shakespeare should be supposed to have written 'slow and moving' shows what a poet may suffer at the hands of a prosaic critic. The mistake in the folio was doubtless one of the ear in transcribing the manuscript." [Unfortunately then for Shakespeare, he must be content to be styled a prosaic poet for there is no doubt he did write 'slow *and moving*' and the truth is the other way, viz., that slow *unmoving*' of the first quarto is a phonetic slip for 'slow *and* moving.' The reading of the folio clearly contains the poet's correction of the version of the 1st quarto. There is no doubt that the poet had in his mind the idea of a clock, with the picture of Time in the centre of the dial, pointing its hands (the slow hand and the moving hand) to the figures of the numerals on the circumference. Scorn is personified and seated in the place of Time and is supposed to point its fingers (slow finger and moving finger) to the same figure — Othello, Othello, Othello, — which takes the place of the numerals on the dial. Shakespeare rightly altered '*A* fixed figure' of the quarto to '*The* fixed figure'; and because 'slow and moving *fingers*' was susceptible of being misinterpreted 'slow fingers and moving fingers', he changed it to 'slow, and moving *finger*' using the singular, with a comma after '*slow*' to show that he meant two fingers, 'the slow finger' and 'the moving finger.' Whether these epithets do or do not satisfy the demands of modern criticism, whether *hand* would not have been better than *finger*, or whether

But there, where I have garner'd up my heart,
Where either I must live or bear no life,
The fountain from the which my current runs
Or else dries up, — to be discarded thence!
Or keep it as a cistern for foul toads
To knot and gender in! — Turn thy complexion there:
Patience, thou young and rose-lipp'd cherubin,
Ay, here look grim as hell!

---

finger was not the more appropriate word with *scorn*, the fact is there, that Shakespeare does refer to the two hands of a clock and not only chooses to call one of them *slow* and the other *moving*, but styles them '*the slow and moving finger*' of the time of scorn. The idea which Othello abhors is, that he should become *the fixed figure* (the same, unchanging figure all around) in the wheel of time, — not merely the passing butt of ridicule for the people of one age, but the standing object of scorn for people of all ages in the cycle of time. Although the metaphor contemplates twelve figures of Othello in the place of the twelve numerals on the dial-plate, it is rightly called '*the fixed figure*,' because it is the *same unchanging* figure all around.]

58. *But there.* Pointing to Desdemona's heart. *There* — a noun equivalent to 'that place.'

Garner'd up my heart — stored (treasured) up all my love.

60. *The fountain.* In apposition with 'there' (noun) in l. 58.

61-3. *To be discarded ... gender in!* That I should be cast off from that spot, or that I should preserve it as a place for low, loathesome creatures to live and thrive in!

62. *Or.* Has here the force of 'what is worse.' Othello is unable to contemplate the darkest situation at once. He first thinks of the comparatively mild calamity — that he should be ejected from the place where he had 'garnered up his heart, &c.' — (that was enough to turn the colour of his patience); then, he thinks of the utterly unbearable mortification and disgrace — that he should be preserving that place as 'a cistern for foul toads, &c.' The first is included in the second: hence, *or*.

63-5. *Turn thy complexion there ... ... here!* The import of this apostrophe does not seem to have been understood. Johnson paraphrases the words well enough, but mistakes the meaning of *there* and *here*, and their connection with the force of the apostrophe. He explains: 'At such an object do thou, *Patience*, thyself *change colour*; at this do thou, even thou, *rosy cherub* as thou art, *look grim as hell*.' '*There*' and '*here*' in the apostrophe do not refer to Desdemona or Desdemona's heart, but to the two situations which Othello has just contemplated with grief and agony, viz., that he should be discarded from Desdemona's heart where he had centred his whole love and life, and that he should preserve it as

Des. I hope my noble lord esteems me honest.
Oth. Oh, ay; as summer flies are in the shambles,
That quicken even with blowing. Oh, thou weed,
Who art so lovely fair and smell'st so sweet
That the sense aches at thee, would thou hadst ne'er been born!
Des. Alas, what ignorant sin have I committed?
Oth. Was this fair paper, this most goodly book,
Made to write whore upon? What committed,

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a cistern for the benefit of base creatures. At the first, that undeserved cruelty — *there*, Othello's patience turns pale and loses its colour; but at the second, this unbearable disgrace — *here*, it assumes a dreadful, devilish hue demanding dire vengeance. The whole force of the apostrophe is destroyed by changing '*here*' in l. 65 to '*there*' according to Capel's suggestion, which many editors have adopted! The action must be carefully noted. Othello is actually weeping and shedding tears throughout this speech. At l. 58, 'But there, where I have garner'd up my heart, &c.' he looks at Desdemona, pointing to her heart with the forefinger of his left hand, and continues in that position upto to the words, 'or else dries up.' When he utters the words, '*to be discarded thence!*' his head turns away from Desdemona, the left hand wheeling off to its furthest stretch with the palm flattened and turned upwards. This posture being preserved, the next exclamation, '*Or keep it as a cistern ... gender in!*' is uttered, with the right hand stretched out, the palm curving and turning towards Desdemona's heart. The apostrophe begins whilst this double posture continues. '*Turn thy complexion there*: (with a slight motion of the left palm to indicate '*there*': then with the eyes turned up and half-closed) *Patience, thou young and rose-lipp'd cherubin,* (the gesture of the left hand is relinquished) *ay, here look grim as hell!* (the head turning towards Desdemona with a fierce look, while the right palm with its curve asserts a repulsive reference to Desdemona's heart at the word '*here*,' so as to imply 'at this which has become a cistern for foul toads.')

64. *Cherubin* — cherub. *Cherubin* (being a corruption of *cherubim*) is really plural, but Shakespeare uses it as singular. Cf. *Temp.* I. ii. 152: 'Oh, a cherubin Thou wast, that did preserve me!'; *M. of V.*, V. i. 62: 'young-ey'd cherubins.'

67-8. *As summer flies ... blowing.* As honest (continent) as the summer-flies which infest the shambles (butchers' stalls) and which conceive the very instant they have blown (laid a batch eggs on) the flesh.

69-70. *Who art ... aches at thee.* Who art so oppressively sweet and lovely.

72-3. *Was this fair paper ... whore upon?* Was such a superb beauty created for pollution? Steevens points out that Massinger has imitated

Committed? Oh, thou public commoner!
I should make very forges of my cheeks,
That would to cinders burn up modesty,
Did I but speak thy deeds. What committed?
Heaven stops the nose at it and the moon winks;
The bawdy wind that kisses all it meets
Is hush'd within the hollow mine of earth,
And will not hear it. What committed?
Impudent strumpet!
Des. By heaven, you do me wrong.

---

this passage in *The Emperor of the East*, IV. v. 145-9:

> "Can you think
> This master-piece of heav'n, this precious vellum
> Of such a purity and virgin whiteness,
> Could be design'd to have perjury and *whoredom*
> In captial letters *writ upon't?*"

74. *What committed?* Many editors use the mark of exclamation after '*committed*' in this and the other lines (73,77,81), under the impression that the word is used with special reference to unlawful acts of love. The punctuation given above is that of the folio and seems the proper one, though the instances are numerous in the folio where the mark of interrogation is used for the mark of exclamation. As Knight remarks, Othello is indignant at Desdemona's question and repeats it *interrogatively*, over and over again, with a mocking fury, but in the ordinary sense.

75-7. *I should make very forges ... deeds.* Even to *speak* of your wicked deeds, I should have to blush so fiery red (with shame) that my cheeks would be converted into actual hot forges which would burn to ashes every trace of modesty in me. The insinuation is, — why don't you blush, you who have *committed* the wicked deeds and are a *woman?* are you so dead to all sense of shame?

78. *Heaven stops ... the moon winks.* 'Heaven cannot endure the smell of it, and the moon closes her eyes at the sight of it' (Deighton). Cf. *Ham.* iii. 36: 'Oh, my offence is rank, it smells to heaven.'

The moon winks. Note that the time is *Sunday night*, before supper [See l. 170] and it is a *moonlight night.*

79-81. *The bawdy wind ... hear it.* 'The crime is so enormous that even the wind, itself so prodigal of its favours, is so shocked that it hides itself within the bosom of the earth rather than listen to it.' (Deighton). Cf. *M. of V.* II. vi. 16: 'Hugged and embraced by the strumpet wind;' *Hen. V.* I. i. 48: 'The air, a charter'd libertine, is still,'

Oth. Are not you a strumpet?
Des. No, as I am a Christian;
If to preserve this vessel for my lord
From any other foul unlawful touch
Be not to be a strumpet, I am none.
Oth. What, not a whore?
Des. No, as I shall be sav'd.
Oth. Is 't possible?
Des. Oh, heaven forgive us!
Oth. I cry you mercy, then;
I took you for that cunning whore of Venice
That married with Othello. — You, mistress,
That have the office opposite to Saint Peter,
And keep the gate of hell!

Enter EMILIA.

You, you, ay, you!
We have done our course; there's money for your pains.
I pray you, turn the key and keep our counsel. [*Exit.*
Emil. Alas, what does this gentleman conceive?
How do you, madam? how do you, my good lady?
Des. Faith, half asleep.
Emil. Good madam, what 's the matter with my lord?
Des. With who?

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84. *Vessel.* Body. Cf. '*Thess.* iv. 4: 'To possess his vessel in sanctification.'

87. *Shall be.* Hope to be.

89. *I cry you mercy, then.* Of course ironical.

91. *Married with.* Cf. *M. N. D.* I. i. 40: 'to marry with Demetrius'; *M. A.* V. iv. 37: 'to marry with my brother's daughter'; *Ham.* I. ii. 151: 'married with mine uncle.'

92. *That have ... Saint Peter.* Whose office (duty) is the opposite of St. Peter's, — i. e., to keep the gate of hell, St. Peter being supposed to keep the gate of heaven.

94. *Course* — business. Pains — trouble.

95. *Turn the key ... counsel.* Lock the door and say nothing of what has happened.

Emil. Why, with my lord, madam.
Des. Who is thy lord?
Emil. He that is yours, sweet lady.
Des. I have none: do not talk to me, Emilia;
I cannot weep, nor answer have I none,
But what should go by water. Prithee, to-night
Lay on my bed my wedding sheets: remember;
And call thy husband hither.
Emil. Here 's a change indeed! [*Exit.*
Des. 'T is meet I should be us'd so, very meet.
How have I been behav'd, that he might stick
The small'st opinion on my least misuse?

Re-enter EMILIA *with* IAGO.

Iago. What is your pleasure, madam? How is 't with you?
Des. I cannot tell. Those that do teach young babes

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105. *By water.* 'That is, be expressed by tears' (Hudson).

106. *Lay ... wedding sheets.* Professor Wilson — father of the 'Double Time' theory — here finds a most conclusive indication of 'long time.' Says the scholar: "Lastly, the wedding sheets were *reserved;* they had been laid by for weeks — months — time long enough to give a saddest character to the bringing them out again — a serious, ominous meaning — disturbed from the quietude, the sanctity, of their sleep by a wife's mortal presentiment that they may be her shroud." It would have been well both for the learned professor and the world, if, instead of doing the needless work of pointing out proofs of 'long time,' he had used his intellect to *disprove* the hallucination of 'short time,' or confessed his inability to prove the real time. But he gave birth to a double-faced monster and loved it! and — made others love it too!

109-110. *How have I been behav'd ... misuse.* 'How can I have behaved, that he could conceive the smallest ill opinion of me from even my least misdeed?' (The Cowden-Clarkes). 'How have I been behaved that he could find the smallest possible fault with my smallest possible misdeed?' (Furness). [The passage is really a condensed form of 'How have I been behav'd, that my behaviour contained in it the least misuse (misdeed, fault, offence) he might stick the smallest opinion (imputation, blame, suspicion) on?]

112. *I cannot tell.* This is with reference to her own question 'How have I behaved, &c.' Desdemona's heart was so full of grief that, when

Do it with gentle means and easy tasks:
He might have chid me so; for, in good faith,
I am a child to chiding.
Iago. What 's the matter, lady?
Emil. Alas, Iago, my lord hath so bewhor'd her,
Thrown such despite and heavy terms upon her,
That true hearts cannot bear 't.
Des. Am I that name, Iago?
Iago. What name, fair lady?
Des. Such as she said my lord did say I was.
Emil. He call'd her whore; a beggar in his drink
Could not have laid such terms upon his callat.
Iago. Why did he so?
Des. I do not know; I am sure I am none such.
Iago. Do not weep, do not weep. Alas the day!
Emil. Hath she forsook so many noble matches,
Her father, and her country, and her friends,
To be call'd whore? would it not make one weep?
Des. It is my wretched fortune.
Iago. Beshrew him for 't!
How comes this trick upon him?
Des. Nay, heaven doth know.
Emil. I will be hang'd, if some eternal villain,
Some busy and insinuating rogue,

---

she began to give vent to it in tears and words, she could not suppress these all at once, upon Iago's arrival.

115. *I am a child to chiding,* i. e., frightened by harsh words, and fit to be corrected only by mild, gentle reproach.

116. *Bewhored her.* 'Abused her as being a whore.'

122. *Callat.* A coarse, lewd woman; a drab; a base strumpet.

130. *Trick.* Caprice, whim.

131-4. This description applies exactly to Iago, even to the particular about 'getting some office,' but it is certain that Emilia's suspicions do not fall on her husband, and it would be a gross mistake, as the Cowden-Clarkes point out, for an actress to deliver this speech in a manner (as by suspiciously eying Iago) to indicate suspicion. Lines 146-8 as well as the utter incredulity of Emilia, in V. ii., when Othello tells her it was her

Some cogging, cozening slave, to get some office,
Have not devis'd this slander ; I 'll be hang'd else.
Iago. Fie, there is no such man ; it is impossible.
Des. If any such there be, heaven pardon him !
Emil. A halter pardon him! and hell gnaw his bones!
Why should he call her whore? who keeps her company?
What place ? what time ? what form ? what likelihood?
The Moor 's abus'd by some most villainous knave,
Some base notorious knave, some scurvy fellow.
O heaven, that such companions thou 'dst unfold,
And put in every honest hand a whip
To lash the rascals naked through the world
Even from the east to the west !
Iago. Speak within door.
Emil. Oh, fie upon them ! Some such squire he was

---

husband who had brought Desdemona's unchastity to his knowledge, prove that there is no suspicion in her mind about her husband. Indeed, in V. ii., she believes that Othello told her a black lie, and asks her husband, as soon as he turns up, to disprove him .

> " He says thou told'st him that his wife was false :
> I know thou didst not, thou'rt not such a villain."

Emilia's abuse of her husband in the present scene bears however a double interest to the audience who are in the secret of his villainy.

131. *Eternal villain.* Walker and Abbott think that '*eternal,*' in this and other instances which they cite, is inaccurately used for '*infernal*', but Furness points out that here, at all events, this is no need for the surmise, for the phrase may well signify, 'an everlasting villain,' one whose villainy is so great that it can never come to an end. Walker admits that the phrase 'eternal villain' seems to be still in use among the common people and draws attention to the Yankee slang '*tarnal.* And Furness supplements Walker by saying : ' When needs must, nowadays, we speak of our friends as *everlasting* fools.'

133. *Some cogging, cozening slave.* Some cheating, beguiling wretch. *Cozen* is from ' cousin ' (Fr. *cousiner*, to claim kindred for advantage or particular ends) — to flatter, to cheat.

137. *A halter pardon him!* Cf. *M. of V.* IV. i. 375: 'A halter gratis.'

141. *Notorious.* 'Notable,' 'egregious.' So again, in V. ii.

142. *Companions* — used contemptuously — fellows.

146. *Squire* — used contemptuously.

That turn'd your wit the seamy side without, 147
And made you to suspect me with the Moor.
Iago. You are a fool; go to.
Des. Alas! Iago,
What shall I do to win my lord again? 150
Good friend, go to him; for, by this light of heaven,
I know not how I lost him. Here I kneel:
If e'er my will did trespass 'gainst his love,
Either in discourse of thought or actual deed, 154
Or that mine eyes, mine ears, or any sense,
Delighted them, or any other form, 156
Or that I do not yet, and ever did,
And ever will (though he do shake me off
To beggarly divorcement) love him dearly,—
Comfort forswear me! Unkindness may do much,
And his unkindness may defeat my life, 161

---

147. *Turn'd your wit ... out.* Turned the bad side of your wit out; befooled you. Cf. II. iii. 52.

148. *Made you to suspect me with the Moor.* Q. When did Iago worry her with this charge?

151. *By this light of heaven.* Pointing to the moonlight. See note on l. 78 *ante.*

154. *Discourse of thought.* 'Discursive range of thought' (Singer). 'Range of thought' (Furness). Cf. *Ham.* I. ii. 'Discourse of reason.'

156. *Delighted them: or any other form.* This is the reading of both the folio and the first quarto. Subsequent quartos have changed *or* to *in* (evidently because the sense was not quite clear), but the text is good as it stands. The meaning is simple when the ellipses are supplied and the train of thought followed: 'If e'er my will did trespass against his love, either in discourse of thought or actual deed, or if mine eyes, mine ears, or any sense, delighted themselves (against his love), or any other form (of trespass was committed by me against his love), or if it be not that I do yet (i. e., even now) love him dearly and ever did (love him dearly) and ever will (love him dearly), &c. — comfort forswear me!

159. *Divorcement.* Divorce.

160. *Comfort forswear me!* May I lose all happiness and contentment! May I become miserable!

161. *Defeat.* Destroy. Fr. *defaire* — undo, spoil. Cf. *Sonn.* LXI. 11: 'Mine own true love that doth my rest defeat;' also I. iii. 340: 'defeat thy favour,'

But never taint my love. I cannot say whore:
It doth abhor me now I speak the word;
To do the act that might the addition earn
Not the world's mass of vanity could make me.
Iago. I pray you, be content; 't is but his humour:
The business of the state does him offence.
And he does chide with you.
Des. If 't were no other,—
Iago. 'T is but so, I warrant.
[*Trumpets within.*
Hark, how these instruments summon to supper!
The messenger of Venice stays the meat:
Go in, and weep not; all things shall be well.—
[*Exeunt Desdemona and Emilia.*

Enter RODERIGO.

How now, Roderigo!
Rod. I do not find
That thou deal'st justly with me.
Iago. What in the contrary?

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163. *It doth abhor me.* 'It is abhorrent to me, it fills me with horror' (Rolfe). Note the pun, *whore* and *abhor*.

164. *Addition* — Name, title. As in IV. i. 103.

165. *Vanity.* 'Splendour, finery' (White).

166. *Be content.* Be calm, be at ease.

167. *Does him offence.* Annoys him.

168. *Chide with.* Quarrel with. Cf. *Cymb.* V. iv. 32: 'With Mars fall out, with Juno chide.'

171. *The messenger of Venice stays the meat.* The actual reading of the folio is 'The Messengers of Venice staies the meate,' on which Furness remarks: "Either 'Messengers' is wrongly in the plural or 'staies' is wrongly in the singular; ... I am inclined to think that 'staies' is in the singular by attraction with 'Venice.'" The truth is the other way, *messengers* being a misprint or mistake for *messenger*. Shakespeare first wrote '*And the great messengers of Venice stay*' (this is the version of the 1st quarto), but when he discovered his oversight and remembered that Lodovico was the only messenger who went to Othello and supped with him, he corrected the line and recast it in the form in which it appears in the folio. Gratiano, as we shall see from the Exposition, sups

Rod. Every day thou dafts me with some device, Iago; and rather, as it seems to me now, keep'st from me all conveniency than suppliest me with the least advantage of hope. I will indeed no longer endure it, nor am I yet persuaded to put up in peace what already I have foolishly suffered.

Iago. Will you hear me, Roderigo?

Rod. I have heard too much, and your words and performances are no kin together.

Iago. You charge me most unjustly.

Rod. With nought but truth. I have wasted myself out of my means. The jewels you have had from me to deliver to Desdemona would half have corrupted a votarist; you have told me she hath received them, and returned me expectations and comforts of sudden respect and acquaintance, but I find none.

Iago. Well, go to; very well.

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elsewhere and does not make his appearance at the castle until after the murder of Desdemona.

175. *Every day.* 'Effect of long time given; though but one day (according to computation by short time) has elapsed since they have been in Cyprus.' (The Cowden-Clarkes, quoted approvingly by Furness). These mysterious modes of computation — by long time and by short time — must be pronounced quite original. It is almost sickening to have to repeatedly call the attention of the reader to the several passages which have been relied on as indications of 'long time' and 'short time', but it is done with a view to make him see the extent to which the delusion of 'Double Time' has mocked the understanding of eminent scholars and critics.

Dafts. Another instance of *s* used for *st* in the second person singular, for the sake of euphony. See note on II. iii. 173. *Daft* is connected with *daff*, *doff* — put off, evade. The quarto reading is *dofftst*.

Device. — trick, pretext.

177. *Conveniency.* Opportunity for securing my purpose.

178. *Advantage of hope.* Comfort to be derived from hope.

179. *To put up in peace.* To put up *with* (endure) peacefully.

183. *Are no kin together.* Do not agree.

188. *Votarist.* A nun, one who has vowed to live a life of celibacy.

189. *Sudden* — quick. *Respect* — regard, love.

191. *Go to.* Keep your mind easy; be patient,

Rod. Very well! go to! I cannot go to, man; nor 'tis not very well: nay, I think it is scurvy, and begin to find myself fopp'd in it.

Iago. Very well.

Rod. I tell you 'tis not very well. I will make myself known to Desdemona. If she will return me my jewels, I will give over my suit and repent my unlawful solicitation. If not, assure yourself I will seek satisfaction of you.

Iago. You have said now.

Rod. Ay, and said nothing but what I protest intendment of doing.

Iago. Why, now I see there 's mettle in thee, and even from this instant do build on thee a better opinion than ever before. Give me thy hand, Roderigo. Thou hast taken against me a most just exception; but yet, I protest, I have dealt most directly in thy affair.

Rod. It hath not appear'd.

Iago. I grant indeed it hath not appear'd, and your suspicion is not without wit and judgment. But, Roderigo, if thou hast that in thee indeed, which I have greater

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194. *Fopp'd.* Made a fool of; duped. This is the reading both of the quartos and the folios, but many editors change the word to '*fobb'd*.'

196-7. *I will ... known to Desdemona.* Furness asks, "Can this refer to anything else but his disguise? his favour defeated with an usurp'd beard?" [Roderigo threatens Iago that he will go see Desdemona and unfold to her the whole transaction done through him, what jewels were sent from time to time, what comforting expectations and promises he received in return, so that she might see if the mediator acted with perfect honesty in the matter.]

199. *Satisfaction of you.* By holding you responsible for my jewels in case she fails to return them. Iago pretends to understand this as a *challenge to a duel* and congratulates him on his bold words: 'You have said now' — i. e., 'Well said! quite right, it is a manly threat.'

202. *Protest* — positively declare.

Intendment — intention.

204. *Mettle.* Metal, spirit.

208. *Directly.* Honestly. Cf. III. iii. 378.

reason to believe now than ever, (I mean purpose, courage and valour) this night show it; if thou the next night following enjoy not Desdemona, take me from this world with treachery and devise engines for my life.

Rod. Well, what is it? is it within reason and compass?

Iago. Sir, there is especial commission come from Venice to depute Cassio in Othello's place.

Rod. Is that true? why, then Othello and Desdemona return again to Venice.

Iago. Oh, no: he goes into Mauritania and taketh away with him the fair Desdemona, unless his abode be lingered here by some accident. Wherein none can be so determinate as the removing of Cassio.

Rod. How do you mean, removing of him?

Iago. Why, by making him uncapable of Othello's place; knocking out his brains.

Rod. And that you would have me to do?

Iago. Ay, if you dare do yourself a profit and a right. He sups to-night with a harlotry, and thither will I go to him; he knows not yet of his honourable fortune. If you will watch his going thence, which I will fashion to fall out between twelve and one, you may take him at your pleasure; I will be near to second your attempt,

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213. *Purpose.* Resolution.

216. *With treachery.* Using treachery.

Devise engines. 'Contrive *racks, tortures*, &c.' (Ritson).

217. *Compass.* Means of accomplishment.

220. *Is that true?* Q. Has Roderigo learnt it already and where?

222. *Mauritania.* 'The ancient name of the land occupied by the Mauri (Moors) now called Morocco or Algiers.'

224. *Lingered* — prolonged, protracted.

225. *Determinate.* Decisive, effectual.

Removing — euphemism for 'murder,' which Roderigo evidently fails to see.

227. *Uncapable.* Cf. *M. of V.* IV. i. 5: 'Uncapable of pity.'

231. *Harlotry.* Harlot (the quarto reading) — abstract for the concrete. Cf. *R. & J.* IV. ii. 14: 'A peevish, self-will'd harlotry it is.'

233. *Fashion.* Contrive.

and he shall fall between us. Come, stand not amazed at it, but go along with me; I will show you such a necessity in his death that you shall think yourself bound to put it on him. It is now high supper-time, and the night grows to waste. About it!

Rod. I will hear further reason for this.

Iago. And you shall be satisfied. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III. *Another room in the Castle.*

Enter OTHELLO, LODOVICO, DESDEMONA, EMILIA, *and* Attendants.

Lod. I do beseech you, sir; trouble yourself no further.

Oth. Oh, pardon me; 't will do me good to walk.

Lod. Madam, good night; I humbly thank your ladyship.

Des. Your honour is most welcome.

Oth. Will you walk, sir?
Oh, Desdemona—

Des. My lord?

Oth. Get you to bed on the instant; I will be returned forthwith: dismiss your attendant there; look it be done.

Des. I will, my lord.

[*Exeunt Othello, Lodovico, and Attendants.*

Emil. How goes it now? he looks gentler than he did.

Des. He says he will return incontinent;

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239. *High supper-time.* High time for supper.

240. *Grows to waste.* 'Is wasting apace' (Malone). 'Is wearing away.' *About it.* Let us set about it.

4. *Will you walk, sir?* 'That is, withdraw; as in *Lear*, IV. vii. 83' (Schmidt). I think Othello simply meant, 'Will you be walking (going), sir?' implying that he would just speak a word with Desdemona and join him in a minute — which he does, before Lodovico goes out of his sight.

11. *Incontinent.* Immediately. Cf. I. iii. 305.

He hath commanded me to go to bed,
And bade me to dismiss you.
Emil. Dismiss me!
Des. It was his bidding; therefore, good Emilia,
Give me my nightly wearing, and adieu:
We must not now displease him.
Emil. I would you had never seen him!
Des. So would not I; my love doth so approve him,
That even his stubbornness, his checks, his frowns,
(Prithee unpin me) have grace and favour in them.
Emil. I have laid those sheets you bade me on the bed.
Des. All 's one. — Good father, how foolish are our minds!
If I do die before, prithee, shroud me
In one of these same sheets.
Emil. Come, come: you talk.
Des. My mother had a maid call'd Barbarie;
She was in love, and he she lov'd prov'd mad

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19. *Checks.* Rebukes. Cf. I. i. 148.

22. *All's one.* It is all the same (whether you laid those sheets on the bed, or not). Cf. *M. A.* V. i. 49. The implication is 'I am not very particular about it now, but since you have done it, let it be.' The reason for Desdemona's saying this will be seen from the Exposition.

Good father. This is the reading of the folios and the later quartos, and, as the Exposition will show, undoubtedly the correct version. The 1st quarto misprints the line as '*All's one good faith:* how foolish &c.'—which makes no sense.

24. *You talk* — that is, talk idly, talk nonsense.

25. *Barbarie.* This is how the name is spelt in the folio; the quartos have *Barbary*, and there seems no warrant for the practice of changing it to *Barbara*. The maid was undoubtedly called *Barbarie* in the household. Knight considers this a pretty word but gives it up fearing it would appear an affectation of singularity to retain it!

26. *Proved mad.* Johnson takes 'mad' as only signifying '*wild, frantic, uncertain*'; Ritson says it ought to mean '*inconstant*'; Keightley would read '*false*,' while Rolfe and the Cowden-Clarkes see no reason why 'mad' should be taken as meaning anything but *mad, insane*. From the context it is evident that Desdemona uses 'mad' for '*unfaithful*' (a gross word which she avoids uttering even as she avoids

And did forsake her. She had a song of 'willow';
An old thing 't was, but it express'd her fortune,
And she died singing it. That song to-night
Will not go from my mind; I have much to do,
But to go hang my head all at one side,
And sing it like poor Barbarie. — Prithee, dispatch.

Emil. Shall I go fetch your night-gown?

Des. No, unpin me here.—
This Lodovico is a proper man.

Emil. A very handsome man.

Des. He speaks well.

Emil. I know a lady in Venice would have walked barefoot to Palestine for a touch of his nether lip.

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explicit reference to the gross deed in line 61 infra); and the words 'and *forsook* her' clearly indicate that the malady of Barbarie's lover was not insanity. The song, which 'expressed her fortune,' does not speak of any demented lover, but one who, when his *fiancée* found fault with him and called him 'false love,' got wild (apparently there was some truth in the charge), spoke insulting words to her — 'If I court moe women, you'll couch with moe men' — and went away never more to be seen! a sad lot (certainly, sadder than a lover's running mad) to be borne by a loving maiden — one, too, who approved the very scorn of the lover and would not blame him. Desdemona's fortune was worse than Barbarie's: her lord had got wild without cause (at all events not from her), showered undeserved abuse on her head, and possibly was going to "shake her off", and she would have to sing Barbarie's song and end her life!

27. *She had a song of 'willow.'* She used to sing a song whose refrain was 'willow willow', &c. The willow (weeping willow) is used as an emblem of sorrow, and a willow garland is emblematic of a forsaken lover. Cf. *M. A.* II. i. 225: 'I offered him my company to a willow-tree ... to make him a garland as being forsaken.'

30-51. The portion from 'I have much to do' in l. 30 to 'that's not next' in l. 51 is not found in the 1st quarto.

30. *To do.* Ado. Cf. III. iii. 73.

31. *But to go hang my head*, &c. — that is, to do anything but to go hang my head, &c.

34. *This Lodovico is a proper man.* The fact over which the poet has cast a veil here, and the train of thought which leads Desdemona to enter into a conversation with Emilia on the beauty and virtues of Lodovico, will be revealed in the Exposition.

Proper. Comely, handsome. Cf. I. iii. 383.

Des. [Singing]
The poor soul sat sighing by a sycamore tree, 39
Sing all a green willow ;
Her hand on her bosom, her head on her knee,
Sing willow, willow, willow.
The fresh streams ran by her, and murmur'd her moans ;
Sing willow, willow, willow ;
Her salt tears fell from her, and soften'd the stones ;
Sing willow, (Lay by these) *willow, willow.*
(Prithee, hie thee ; he 'll come anon)
Sing all a green willow must be my garland.
Let nobody blame him ; his scorn I approve,— 49
(Nay, that 's not next. — Hark! who is't that knocks ?
Emil. It 's the wind.)
Des. [Singing]
I call'd my love false love ; but what said he then ?
Sing willow, willow, willow :
If I court moe women, you'll couch with moe men.—
So, get thee gone ; good night. Mine eyes do itch ;
Doth that bode weeping ?
Emil. 'T is neither here nor there.
Des. I have heard it said so. — Oh, these men, these men !— 57
Dost thou in conscience think, — tell me, Emilia,—
That there be women do abuse their husbands
In such gross kind ?

39-49. These snatches are taken from an old ballad which may be found in Percy's *Reliques* (p. 98). It is there a man's song, entitled ' A Lover's Complaint, being forsaken of his Love '; but Shakespeare has converted it into a woman's song varying the diction somewhat and adding a few lines to suit the change. Lines 52 and 54 are altogether the poet's own, there being nothing corresponding to them in the original.

56. *'Tis neither ... there.* It is nothing this way or that, forebodes neither weeping nor joy.

57. *Oh, these men, these men !* — how lightly they think of women !

58. *In conscience.* Truly.

Emil. There be some such, no question.
Des. Wouldst thou do such a deed for all the world?
Emil. Why, would not you?
Des. No, by this heavenly light!
Emil. Nor I neither by this heavenly light;
I might do 't as well i' the dark.
Des. Wouldst thou do such a deed for all the world?

Emil. The world 's a huge thing; it is a great price for a small vice.

Des. In troth, I think thou wouldst not.

Emil. In troth, I think I should; and undo 't when I had done. Marry, I would not do such a thing for a joint-ring, nor for measures of lawn, nor for gowns, petticoats, nor caps, nor any petty exhibition; but, for the whole world, — why, who would not make her husband a cuckold to make him a monarch? I should venture purgatory for 't.

Des. Beshrew me, if I would do such a wrong
For the whole world.

Emil. Why, the wrong is but a wrong i' the world; and having the world for your labour, 't is a wrong in your own world, and you might quickly make it right.

Des. I do not think there is any such woman.

---

62. *By this heavenly light* — pointing to the moonlight. See IV. ii. 151. Note that the moon has not set yet.

63. *Nor I neither by this heavenly light.* A pun on *by.* 'Nor would I do the deed openly where I might be seen.'

69. *Undo it* — make amends to my husband by giving him all the world and 'making him a monarch.' See l. 74.

71. *Joint-ring.* 'A split-ring, the halves made to fit in each other very closely when united, and the joined hands to lock it tight. Such rings were extensively used as love-tokens, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. (Fairholt, quoted by Dyce).

72. *Exhibition.* Allowance. See I. iii. 237.

74-5. *Venture purgatory.* Run the risk of being sent to purgatory.

78. *A wrong i' the world.* 'That is, a wrong in the world's eye, a conventional wrong. Emilia is quibbling' (White).

Emil. Yes, a dozen ; and as many to the vantage as would store the world they played for.
But I do think it is their husbands' faults
If wives do fall. Say that they slack their duties,
And pour our treasures into foreign laps,
Or else break out in peevish jealousies,
Throwing restraint upon us; or say they strike us,
Or scant our former having in despite ;
Why, we have galls, and though we have some grace,
Yet have we some revenge. Let husbands know
Their wives have sense like them ; they see and smell
And have their palates both for sweet and sour,
As husbands have. What is it that they do
When they change us for others ? Is it sport?
I think it is ; and doth affection breed it ?
I think it doth ; is 't frailty that thus errs ?
It is so too ; and have not we affections,
Desires for sport, and frailty, as men have ?
Then let them use us well ; else let them know,
The ills we do, their ills instruct us so.

Des. Good night, good night ; heaven me such uses send,
Not to pick bad from bad, but by bad mend ! [*Exeunt.*

---

82. *To the vantage.* 'Over and above', 'in addition to them.'

84-101. These lines are not found in the 1st quarto. Emilia evidently recounts her own experiences, real or fancied, with her good husband.

87. *Peevish.* Foolish, unreasonable. Cf. II. iii. 181.

89. *Scant ... despite.* Out of spite cut down the usual allowance or pin-money.

90. *Galls.* 'Bitter feelings.'

Grace. Free mercy.

92. *Sense.* Sensibility ; power of feeling pleasure and pain.

101. *The ills we do ... so.* We sin because they set us the example.

102. *Uses.* This is the reading of the folio. The quarto reading is *usage*, which Shakespeare altered to *uses*, evidently to bring it nearer to Emilia's word in l. 100, 'let them *use* us well.' The Cowden-Clarkes prefer the quarto reading and interpret *usage* as 'treatment', explaining

ACT V.

SCENE I. *Cyprus. A road near the beach.*

Enter IAGO *and* RODERIGO.

Iago. Here, stand behind this bark; straight will he
come:
Wear thy good rapier bare, and put it home.
Quick, quick; fear nothing; I 'll be at thy elbow.
It makes us, or it mars us; think on that,
And fix most firm thy resolution.

Rod. Be near at hand; I may miscarry in 't.

Iago. Here, at thy hand; be bold, and take thy stand.
[*Retires.*

---

the passage as follows: 'May Heaven send me such treatment as that I shall not have to sort out bad from bad, but — if I must have bad treatment — to mend my own character by learning to bear bad treatment patiently.' *Uses* is however the better reading, for it gives the same meaning while it permits the pun whereby Desdemona may indirectly reproach Emilia for her tendency to learn bad ways from bad lessons. The purport of Emilia's speech was that husbands should *use* their wives well and act fairly by them; else, their *ills*, ill uses, bad ways of conduct, would teach them and lead them into bad ways. Desdemona takes up Emilia's idea of ill uses and puns on the word '*use*,' in the double sense of '*treatment*' and '*lesson*.' — 'May heaven *send me such uses* (grant me such treatment, teach me such lessons) as may not lead to my imitating bad examples but to my mending and improving thereby.

SCENE I. The place of this scene is generally fixed as '*A street*', following Rowe and Theobald; but it will be seen from the Exposition that it is '*A road near the beach*.' The movements of Gratiano and Lodovico, as well as other matters of detail, will be explained in the Exposition.

1. *This bark.* Refers probably to a small vessel stranded and lying on the shore very near the road. *Bark* is the folio reading. The quarto reading is *bulk*, which is adopted by almost every editor, including Knight. *Bulk* is explained as 'a part of a building jutting out.' The Cowden-Clarkes think that *bulk* may refer to a stone-stand intended for porters to rest their loads on.

5. *Resolution.* 'Five syllables' (White).

Rod. I have no great devotion to the deed;
And yet he hath given me satisfying reasons:
'T is but a man gone. Forth, my sword; he dies.
Iago. I have rubb'd this young quat almost to the sense,
And he grows angry. Now, whether he kill Cassio,
Or Cassio him, or each do kill the other,
Every way makes my game. Live Roderigo,
He calls me to a restitution large
Of gold and jewels that I bobb'd from him,
As gifts to Desdemona;
It must not be. If Cassio do remain,
He hath a daily beauty in his life
That makes me ugly; and, besides, the Moor
May unfold me to him; there stand I in much peril:
No, he must die. — But so; I hear him coming.

---

9. *Satisfying reasons.* Q. When did Iago give these to Roderigo and what were they?

10. *He dies.* He shall die. See note on II. iii. 160.

11. *Quat.* 'A word still used in the midland counties for *pimple* or *pustule;* which being *rubbed,* is made to smart. *Rubbed to the sense* means rubbed to the quick, or to seat of sensation.' (The Cowden-Clarkes). *Quat* is here applied contemptuously to Roderigo. Cf. *T. N.* II. v. 82: 'Out, scab!' Steevens quotes Dekker, *Gul's Hornbook,* 1609: 'a yong quat of the first yeeres revennew."

16. *That I bobb'd from him.* 'That I fooled (cheated) him out of' (Malone). Cf. *Tr. & Cr.* III. i. 76: 'You shall not bob us out of our melody.'

19-20. *He hath a daily beauty ... ugly.* This has been altogether misinterpreted by critics and commentators, who take it as referring to 'Cassio's nobility of character which made the baseness of his own (Iago's) appear all the fouler in comparison.' Iago refers to nothing better than that Cassio, who was now a dismissed man beseeching his help and advice, would, if left alive, be thenceforward governor of Cyprus, while he would have to be his lieutenant and subordinate and put up everyday with the ugly mockery of the position he had coveted and secured after so much trouble.

22. *But so.* Probably intended for 'But, soft!' (Dyce). The quarto reading is 'be't so.'

Enter CASSIO.

Rod. I know his gait, 't is he. — Villain, thou diest!
[*Makes a pass at Cassio.*

Cas. That thrust had been mine enemy indeed,
But that my coat is better than thou know'st;
I will make proof of thine. [*Draws & wounds Roderigo.*

Rod. Oh, I am slain!
[*Iago from behind wounds Cassio in the leg, & exit.*

Cas. I am maim'd for ever. Help, ho! murther! murther! [*Falls.*

Enter OTHELLO.

Oth. The voice of Cassio; Iago keeps his word.

Rod. Oh, villain that I am!

Oth. It is even so.

Cas. Oh, help, ho! light! a surgeon!

Oth. 'T is he. — O brave Iago, honest and just,
That hast such noble sense of thy friend's wrong!
Thou teachest me. — Minion, your dear lies dead,
And your unblest fate hies; strumpet, I come!
Forth of my heart those charms, thine eyes, are blotted;
Thy bed, lust-stain'd, shall with lust's blood be spotted.
[*Exit.*

---

25. *Coat.* 'That is, *coat of proof*, or shirt of mail, worn beneath his outer garments' (Rolfe). Malone supposes that Iago, *overhearing these words of Cassio*, infers that Cassio is wearing secret armour, and wounds him in the leg. [But Iago's ear had probably already caught the clink of Roderigo's thrust and revealed the fact before Cassio opened his lips.]

26. *Proof.* Trial. Cf. I. i. 27.

31-36. 'Ingleby, believing that Shakespeare did not intend Othello to speak at all in this Scene, denies that the poet wrote these lines, which he calls '*atrocious stuff*' (Furness). The imperfectness of Ingleby's imagination is solely responsible for his ignorant belief. *Here* is the turning point of the tragedy, which seems to have escaped the perception of critics. The matter will be made clear in the Exposition.

33. *Minion* — lit., favourite — used contemptuously, a faithless woman.

34. *Unblest.* Accursed. See II. iii. 302.

36. *Bed lust-stained.* Cf. IV. i. 202.

Enter LODOVICO *and* GRATIANO.

Cas. What, ho! no watch? no passage? murther! murther!

Gra. 'T is some mischance; the voice is very direful.

Cas. Oh, help!

Lod. Hark!

Rod. Oh, wretched villain!

Lod. Two or three groan; it is a heavy night;
These may be counterfeits; let's think 't unsafe
To come in to the cry without more help.

Rod. Nobody come? then shall I bleed to death.

Enter IAGO, *with a light.*

Lod. Hark!

Gra. Here 's one comes in his shirt, with light and weapons.

Iago. Who 's there? whose noise is this that cries on murther?

Lod. We do not know.

Iago. Did not you hear a cry?

Cas. Here, here! for heaven's sake, help me!

Iago. What 's the matter?

Gra. This is Othello's ancient, as I take it.

Lod. The same indeed; a very valiant fellow.

Iago. What are you here that cry so grievously?

---

37. *No passage?* 'No passengers?' 'No passers-by?'

41. *Oh, wretched villain* (that I am)! Roderigo reproaches himself. See l. 29.

42. *A heavy night.* 'A *thick, cloudy* night' (Johnson). [It was a *dark* night but certainly it was not cloudy. The moon had set but the stars were shining. See note on V. ii. 2.]

43. *These may be counterfeits.* That is, false groans to decoy passers-by. Q. Where was Gratiano all this while, where did he lodge and sup, and what brings him and Lodovico on the Scene?

48. *Cries on.* Repeatedly cries out.

53. *What are you?* Who are you? See II. iii. 280, 331, III. iii. 36, etc. Cf. ll. 59 and 65.

Cas. Iago? Oh, I am spoil'd, undone by villains!
Give me some help.
Iago. Oh me, lieutenant! what villains have done this?
Cas. I think that one of them is hereabout,
And cannot make away.
Iago. Oh, treacherous villains!—
What are you there? come in, and give some help.
[*To Lodovico and Gratiano.*
Rod. Oh, help me here!
Cas. That 's one of them.
Iago. Oh, murd'rous slave! Oh, villain!
[*Stabs* Roderigo.
Rod. Oh, damn'd Iago! Oh, inhuman dog!
Iago. Kill men i' the dark!—Where be these bloody thieves?—
How silent is this town!—Ho! murther! murther!—
What may you be? are you of good or evil?
Lod. As you shall prove us, praise us.
Iago. Signior Lodovico?
Lod. He, sir.
Iago. I cry you mercy. Here 's Cassio hurt by villains.
Gra. Cassio!
Iago. How is 't, brother?
Cas. My leg is cut in two.
Iago. Marry, heaven forbid!
Light, gentlemen; I 'll bind it with my shirt.

---

54. *Spoil'd.* Maimed, disabled.

58. *Make away.* Get away. Cf. '*make after*' (I. i. 68) and '*make for*' (I. iii. 14).

65. *What may you be ... evil?* Who may you be? Are you honest citizens or thieves and murderers.

66. *As you shall ... praise us.* Say that we are of good or evil as you shall find it. Cf. *Tr. & Cr.* III. ii. 97: 'praise us as we are tasted, allow us as we prove.'

69. *Cry you mercy.* Beg your pardon. Cf. 93 *infra.*

73. *Light, gentlemen.* This does not mean 'bring a light, gentlemen' as commentators explain, but 'hold this light, gentlemen, while I bind

Enter BIANCA.

Bian. What is the matter, ho? who is 't that cried?
Iago. Who is 't that cried!
Bian. Oh, my dear Cassio! my sweet Cassio! Oh, Casso, Cassio, Cassio!
Iago. Oh, notable strumpet! — Cassio, may you suspect
Who they should be that have thus mangled you?
Cas. No.
Gra. I am sorry to find you thus; I have been to seek you.
Iago. Lend me a garter. — So. — Oh, for a chair,
To bear him easily hence!
Bian. Alas, he faints*!* Oh, Cassio, Cassio, Cassio*!*
Iago. Gentlemen all, I do suspect this trash
To be a party in this injury.—
Patience awhile, good Cassio. — Come, come;
Lend me a light. — Know we this face or no?
Alas, my friend and my dear countryman
Roderigo*!* no: yes, sure: yes, 'tis Roderigo.
Gra. What, of Venice?
Iago. Even he, sir; did you know him?
Gra. Know him*!* ay.
Iago. Signior Gratiano? I cry you gentle pardon;
These bloody accidents must excuse my manners,
That so neglected you.
Gra. I am glad to see you.
Iago. How do you, Cassio? — Oh, a chair, a chair*!*
Gra. Roderigo*!*

---

the leg with my shirt;' (Iago had brought a light with him — l. 47).

78. *Notable strumpet.* See 'notorious' IV. ii. 141.

82. *So* — after wrapping the garter round Cassio's leg.

83. *Easily.* Without shaking him and giving him pain.

85. *Trash.* Worthless creature. Cf. II. i. 303.

94. *My manners.* My apparent rudeness in not recognising you.

Iago. He, he, 't is he. — [*A chair brought in.*] Oh, that 's well said; the chair.. 98
Some good man bear him carefully from hence;
I 'll fetch the general's surgeon. — [*To Bianca*] For you, mistress,
Save you your labour. — He that lies slain here, Cassio,
Was my dear friend; what malice was between you?
Cas. None in the world; nor do I know the man.
Iago. [*To Bianca*] What, look you pale? — Oh, bear him out o' the air. — [*Cas. & Rod. are borne off.*
Stay you, good gentlemen. — Look you pale, mistress?—
Do you perceive the gastness of her eye?— 106
Nay, if you stare, we shall hear more anon.—
Behold her well; I pray you, look upon her:
Do you see, gentlemen? nay, guiltiness will speak, 109
Though tongues were out of use.

Enter EMILIA.

Emil. Alas, what 's the matter? what 's the matter, husband?
Iago. Cassio hath here been set on in the dark
By Roderigo and fellows that are scap'd;
He 's almost slain, and Roderigo quite dead.
Emil. Alas, good gentleman! alas, good Cassio!
Iago. This is the fruits of whoring. — Prithee, Emilia,
Go know of Cassio where he supp'd to-night.— 117
What, do you shake at that?

---

98. *Well said.* Well done. See II. i. 167; IV. i. 113.

106. *Gastness.* 'Ghastliness,' 'haggard look.'

109-10. *Guiltiness will speak ... use.* Cf. *Ham* II. ii. 569:

> "For murder, though it have no tongue, will speak
> With most miraculous organ."

117. *Go know of Cassio where he supp'd to-night.* Commentators get into a gratuitous muddle over this line, and it is surprising that Furness quotes them with apparent approval. Malone says: "In the last Scene of the preceding Act [*sic*], Iago informs Roderigo that Cassio

Bian. He supp'd at my house; but I therefore shake not.
Iago. Oh, did he so? I charge you, go with me.
Emil. Oh, fie upon thee, strumpet!
Bian. I am no strumpet; but of life as honest
As you that thus abuse me.
Emil. As I? fie upon thee!
Iago. Kind gentlemen, let's go see poor Cassio dress'd.
Come, mistress, you must tell 's another tale.—
Emilia, run you to the citadel,
And tell my lord and lady what hath happ'd.—

---

was to sup with Bianca; that he would *accompany* Cassio to her house, and would take care to *bring him away* from thence between twelve and one. Cassio, too, had himself informed Iago (IV. i.) that he *would sup* with Bianca, and Iago had promised to meet him at her house. Perhaps, however, Iago chose to appear ignorant of Cassio's movements during the evening." Steevens asks: "Yet how happens it that Bianca, instead of replying, — 'He supp'd,' &c. — did not answer, addressing herself to Iago: 'Why, you well know He supp'd,' &c. The former line being imperfect, some such words might have been omitted. Or perhaps, our author was unwilling that Bianca should say, in the presence of Iago's wife, that he too had been of Cassio's supper-party; and hence this seeming inconsistency." Singer explains: "We must suppose that Iago thought it more secure to waylay Cassio, as we find he does, without actually joining him at supper time." [Ho! what is this blind confusion? In the the first place, Iago never told Roderigo that he would *accompany* Cassio to Bianca's house nor that he would *bring him away* from that place: he simply told the dupe (IV. ii. 231-4) that Cassio was to sup that night 'at a harlotry', that he would *go thither to him* (be it noted, *not* to sup but apparently to keep chatting so as) to fashion *his return* (of course by himself) to fall between twelve and one. Secondly, in reply to Iago's question, 'Will you sup there?' Cassio only told him that he *intended* to do so (IV. i. 159) and there would be no inconsistency in Iago's wishing to find out from Cassio whether he *did* sup there; especially, as Cassio had already been borne off and he knew that Emilia was not really going for the information, for Bianca would give (as she did give) it herself. Thirdly, Bianca did not know that Cassio had told Iago of his intention to sup at her place. Fourthly, Iago did not sup at Bianca's place that night, neither had he intended to sup there. Why Iago draws out from Bianca's lips the fact that Cassio supped with her that night and why he tries to incriminate the poor woman will be fully explained in the Exposition.]

Will you go on afore? — [*Aside*] This is the night
That either makes me or fordoes me quite. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE. II. *A Bedchamber in the Castle;* DESDEMONA *in bed asleep; a light burning.*

Enter OTHELLO.

Oth. It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul,—

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128. *Will you go on afore?* This is addressed to Bianca, who, Iago pretends to think, will run away.

129. *Fordoes.* 'Undoes', 'ruins.' Cf. *Ham.* II. i. 102: 'This is the very ecstasy of love; Whose violent property foredoes itself.'

SCENE II. This and the previous scene which contain the *dénouement* of the tragedy are extremely complex in the movement of the action, which critics and commentators and even actors do not seem to have attempted to understand. No wonder that the simplest passages have presented the greatest difficulty and even the inimitable art of Shakespeare has, to some critics, appeared feeble and defective!

1. *It is the cause ... my soul.* Critics and commentators have utterly failed to understand the meaning of this simple line which Othello utters in the midst of the debate with his soul. When this debate is carefully followed and when Othello's mental condition is correctly understood, there will be no difficulty in seeing that 'it' in this line refers to '*lust*,' which he concludes is the cause of Desdemona's folly and which he is ashamed to mention to the *chaste stars* which are free from it. As soon as Othello hears Cassio's cry for help and believes that Iago has kept his word, he hastens homewards to put an end to Desdemona:

"Forth of my heart those charms, thine eyes, are blotted;
Thy bed, lust-stain'd, shall with lust's blood be spotted."

Revolve his thoughts how he might, that is the only conclusion to which he could come: — *lust* is the cause, it is at the bottom, of her folly: and now as he sees the sleeping beauty in all her youthful bloom, he has no doubt whatever about it. Yet he *will not shed her blood* (lust's blood which he had even now resolved to shed), *nor scar that whiter skin of hers* &c. *Yet she must die*, &c. The situation will be fully explained in the Exposition. It is amusing to read the explanations into which scholars have been betrayed by their ignorance of Othello's mental condition. Johnson says: 'The abruptness of this soliloquy makes it obscure. The meaning, I think, is this: — I am here (says Othello in his mind) overwhelmed with horror. What is the reason of this perturbation? Is it want of resolution to do justice? Is it the dread of shedding blood? No; it is not the action that shocks me, but 'it is the cause, it is the cause, my soul.' Steevens says: 'Othello, full of horror at the cruel

Let me not name it to you, you chaste stars!— 2
It is the cause. Yet I 'll not shed her blood,
Nor scar that whiter skin of hers that snow,

---

action which he is about to perpetrate, seems at this instant to be seeking his justification, by representing to himself the *cause*, i. e., the greatness of the provocation he had received. He may, however, mean — It is the *cause* of chastity and virtue that I maintain.' Hudson remarks: "Othello means that Desdemona's crime is the sole motive or reason that impels him to the present act; that in this alone he has a justifying cause, a 'compelling occasion,' for what he is about to do; so that he cannot justly lie under the reproach of having acted from any subjective or self-generated *animus* of revengeful jealousy." White confesses: "This is, to me, one of the most doubtful and perplexing passages in all these plays. Which is the emphatic word, 'it', or 'is', or 'cause,' and what is 'the cause,' and of what it is the cause, I am not ready to decide. That 'it' in the second line refers to Desdemona's supposed unchastity is plain enough; but that her unchastity is 'the cause' is not so certain. For Othello to say to himself, and at this moment, that Desdemona's conduct is the cause of his intended murder, seems very tame; and the sixth line, with its conclusion, 'else she'll betray more men,' seems to imply that Othello has deluded himself into looking upon his act as providential rather than retributive, and that 'cause' is his emphatic word." Furness agrees that the first 'cause' is assuredly emphatic but asks, 'Is it necessary to emphasise any one word? Is not the mere repetition of each word in itself an emphasis of each word?' Fechter cuts the Gordian knot right through with a small toilette glass, fallen from Desdemona's hand and lying near her! As Othello comes slowly forward to the bed to look at Desdemona, he "accidentally touches the glass in which he sees his bronzed face, — *(With bitter despair)*: 'It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul! *(returning to the window, his eyes fixed on the heavens)*. Let me not name it to you, you chaste stars! — *(looking at his face once again)*. It is the cause! *(He violently throws the glass into the sea, goes to the door, locks it, advances to the bed, half-drawing his sword; then suddenly stops, and returns it to the scabbard)* Yet I'll,' &c." Oh, the mighty mystery of a glass!

2. *Chaste stars.* 'In classical poetry the Moon is Diana, the goddess of *chastity*, and the stars are the train of *virgins* attending on her' (Hudson). [The *purity* of the stars forbids the cause (viz., lust) to be named in their presence. Note that Othello refers only to the stars. The moon had set before Cassio was attacked by Roderigo. See note on V. i. 42. Booth, Salvini and others introduce moonlight through the window, evidently under a misapprehension.]

4. *Of hers.* This form is now 'generally applied to one out of a class, whether the class exist or be imaginary.' Shakespeare however uses it very often where even the conception of a class is impossible. Cf. IV. i. 137.

And smooth as monumental alabaster.
Yet she must die, else she 'll betray more men.
Put out the light, and then — put out the light !

---

5. *Monumental*. That is, used for monuments. Cf. *R. of L.* 419:

> " Her azure veins, her alabaster skin,
> Her coral lips, her snow-white dimpled chin."

6. *Betray*. Entice, lead into sin (as Othello believed she had done Cassio) ; ruin.

7. *Put out the light and then — put out the light !* The simple meaning of this line is — I must first put out the light (pointing to the light burning in the bed-chamber) and then proceed to put out the light (of her life — pointing to Desdemona on the bed). Editors and actors have however exercised their imagination in interpreting it according to their individual inclinations. Goldwin Smith would expunge the line altogether and make it a stage direction (which he believes it really is), but he does not seem to notice the absurdity this will land him in, when Desdemona talks of Othello's ' eyes rolling ' and his ' gnawing his nether lip.' Some are for making Othello enter the chamber with a taper in hand, which is equally absurd. Some believe that Shakespeare wrote — ' and then put out *thy* light,' or possibly ' *her* light.' Warburton would read, ' Put out the light, and then — put out the light ?' He says : " The meaning is, I will put out the light, and *then* proceed to the execution of my purpose. But the expression of *putting out the light*, bringing to mind the effects of the extinction of the light of life, he breaks short, and questions himself about the effects of this metaphorical extinction, introduced by a repetition of his first words, as much as to say, But hold, let me first weigh the reflections which this expression so naturally excites." Farmer thinks that Warburton's punctuation gives a spirit which was not intended, while Boswell says : " If Warburton's explanation be an error, it is *demptus per vim*, and I, for one, am very sorry to part with it. Broken sentences are very much in Shakespeare's manner, and are surely natural in the perturbed state of Othello's mind. I am unwilling to persuade myself that a regulation of the text which contains so much beauty could be merely the refinement of a critic, and that our great author, in one of his most highly-wrought scenes, instead of it, intended nothing but a cold conceit." Dyce pooh-poohs this remark about ' cold conceit ' while White says : ' Warburton's ingenious reading makes the second clause the lively expression of stimulated intelligence ; to me it is the despairing utterance of the profoundest woe.' No wonder that Fielding has made this the subject of parody in *A Journey from this World to the Next* : " I then observed Shakespeare standing between Betterton and Booth, and deciding a Difference between those two great Actors, concerning the placing an Accent in one of his lines ; this was disputed on both sides with a Warmth, which surprised me in Elysium, till I discovered by Intuition that every Soul retained its principal Characteristic, being indeed, its

If I quench thee, thou flaming minister,
I can again thy former light restore,
Should I repent me; but once put out thy light,
Thou cunning'st pattern of excelling nature,
I know not where is that Promethean heat
That can thy light relume. When I have pluck'd thy rose,

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very Essence. The Line was that celebrated one in *Othello*: 'Put out the Light, and then put out the Light,' according to Betterton. Mr. Booth contended to have it thus: 'Put out the light, and then put out *the* Light.' I could not help offering my Conjecture on this Occasion, and suggested it might perhaps be: 'Put out the Light, and then put out *thy* Light.' Another hinted a Reading very *sophisticated* in my Opinion, 'Put out the Light, and then put out *thee,* Light,' making 'Light' to be in the vocative Case. Another would have altered this last Word, and read, 'Put out thy Light, and then put out thy Sight.' But Betterton said, if the Text was to be *disturbed,* he saw no reason why a Word might not be changed as well as a Letter, and instead of 'put out thy Light,' you might read, 'put out thy *eyes*.' At last it was agreed on all sides to refer the matter to the decision of Shakespeare himself, who delivered his Sentiments as follows: 'Faith, Gentlemen, it is so long since I wrote the Line I have forgot my Meaning. This I know, could I have dreamt so much Nonsense would have been talked and writ about it, I would have blotted it out of my Works; for I am sure, if any of these be my Meaning, it doth me very little Honour.' He was then interrogated concerning some other ambiguous Passages in his Works, but he declined any satisfactory Answer, saying, if Mr. Theobald had not *writ about it* sufficiently, there were three or four more new Editions of his Plays coming out, which he hoped would satisfy every one; Concluding, 'I marvel nothing so much, as that Men will gird themselves at discovering obscure Beauties in an author. Certes, the greatest and most pregnant Beauties are ever the plainest and most striking; and, when two Meanings of a Passage can in the least balance our Judgments which to prefer, I hold it matter of unquestionable Certainty that neither of them are [*sic*] worth a farthing."

8. *Minister.* Servant.

11. *Thou cunning'st ... nature.* 'Thou most skilfully-wrought masterpiece of nature in her best efforts' (Deighton).

12. *Promethean heat.* 'The vital principle; the fire with which Prometheus quickened into life his clay images. ... Prometheus made men of clay, and stole fire from heaven to animate them. For this he was chained by Zeus to Mount Caucasus, where an eagle preyed on his liver daily.' — *Brewer.*

13. *Thy rose.* This is the folio reading. The quartos read '*the* rose' in this line and 'smell *it*' in line 15. Furness very properly remarks:

I cannot give it vital growth again,
It needs must wither; I 'll smell thee on the tree.
[*Kissing her.*
Oh, balmy breath, that dost almost persuade
Justice to break her sword! One more, one more.
Be thus when thou art dead, and I will kill thee,
And love thee after. One more, and that 's the last;
So sweet was ne'er so fatal. I must weep,
But they are cruel tears: this sorrow 's heavenly;
It strikes where it doth love. She wakes.

Des. Who 's there? Othello?

Oth. Ay, Desdemona.

Des. Will you come to bed, my lord?

Oth. Have you pray'd to-night, Desdemon?

Des. Ay, my lord.

Oth. If you bethink yourself of any crime
Unreconcil'd as yet to heaven and grace,
Solicit for it straight.

Des. Alack, my lord, what may you mean by that?

Oth. Well, do it, and be brief; I will walk by:

"To me, this (*thy* rose) is far preferable to *the rose* of Qq. This is 'beauty's Rose' of the *Sonnets*."

15. *On the tree.* That is, before I kill you.

20. *Fatal.* Here used for 'fated'; ill-fated. Such sweetness as thine was never so doomed; such a sweet kiss as thine was never destined to be destroyed. Cf. l. 37 below.

21. *Cruel tears.* Because, though he could not help weeping at her fate and shedding tears of compassion, those tears did not soften his heart and change his determination to kill her.

This sorrow's heavenly. Cf. *Heb.* xii. 6: 'For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth.' Johnson explains: 'This tenderness with which I lament the punishment which justice compels me to inflict, is a holy passion.' Hudson remarks: 'The sorrow is heavenly, because it is baptised and washed into holiness by the sacred and divine regards of justice.'

25. *Desdemon.* See note on III. i. 55.

27. *Unreconciled ... grace.* In respect of which you have yet to ask for forgiveness and seek reconciliation to heaven.

28. *Solicit.* Plead for (heaven's grace).

30. *Walk by,* i. e., aside and leave you undisturbed,

I would not kill thy unpreparèd spirit;
No; heaven forfend! I would not kill thy soul.

Des. Talk you of killing?

Oth. Ay, I do.

Des. Then heaven
Have mercy on me!

Oth. Amen, with all my heart!

Des. If you say so, I hope you will not kill me.

Oth. Humh!

Des. And yet I fear you; for you 're fatal then
When your eyes roll so: why I should fear I know not,
Since guiltiness I know not, but yet I feel I fear.

Oth. Think on thy sins.

Des. They are loves I bear to you.

Oth. Ay, and for that thou diest.

Des. That death 's unnatural that kills for loving.
Alas, why gnaw you so your nether lip?
Some bloody passion shakes your very frame:
These are protents; but yet I hope, I hope,
They do not point on me.

Oth. Peace, and be still!

Des. I will, so: what 's the matter?

Oth. That handkerchief which I so lov'd and gave thee

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31. *Thy unprepared spirit.* Thee, when thy soul is unprepared.

32. *Forfend.* Defend against, avert, forbid. Cf. l. 185 below.

Kill thy soul. Ruin it (send it to hell) by killing you before you have atoned for your sins.

37. *Fatal.* Deadly. Cf. l. 20 above.

41. *Ay, ... diest.* 'Said with harsh irony' (Deighton).

42. *Unnatural.* Malone compares *Rich III.* I. ii. 134. 'It is a quarrel most unnatural, To be revenged on him that loveth you.'

44. *Bloody passion.* Cruel feeling, murderous intent.

46. *Point on me,* i. e., at me. Cf. *Tr. & Cr.* I. iii. 331: 'find Hector's purpose Pointing on him.'

47. Following the quarto punctuation which, as Furness remarks, indicates the true reading.

Thou gav'st to Cassio.
Des. No, by my life and soul!
Send for the man, and ask him.
Oth. Sweet soul, take heed,
Take heed of perjury; thou art on thy death-bed.
Des. Ay, but not yet to die.
Oth. Yes, presently:
Therefore confess thee freely of thy sin;
For to deny each article with oath
Cannot remove nor choke the strong conception
That I do groan withal. Thou art to die.
Des. Oh, heaven have mercy on me!
Oth. I say, amen.
Des. And have you mercy too! I never did
Offend you in my life; never lov'd Cassio
But with such general warranty of heaven
As I might love; I never gave him token.
Oth. By heaven, I saw my handkerchief in 's hand.
O perjur'd woman! thou dost stone my heart,
And makes me call what I intend to do
A murther, which I thought a sacrifice.
I saw the handkerchief.

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52. *Presently.* 'At the present time,' at once, immediately. Cf. II. i. 214, iii. 301; III. i. 37, where it means 'after a short while, soon.'

54. *Article.* Particular.

55-6. *Nor choke ... withal.* 'Nor quell the firm conviction of your guilt with which my soul is oppressed.' (Deighton).

59. *Offend you.* 'Commit any offence against you.'

60-1. *But with ... might love.* Except with that love which heaven allows as between fellow-creatures generally.

63-5. *Thou dost stone ... sacrifice.* 'Thou dost harden my heart by denying thy guilt, and causest me to kill thee from wrath at thy perjury, when I intended thy death to be a sacrifice made to justice.' (The Cowden-Clarkes). 'Makest me kill thee with the rage of a murderer, when I thought to have sacrificed thee to justice with the calmness of a priest striking a victim' (Johnson). Cf. *J. C.* II. i. 166: 'Let us be sacrificers, but not butchers, Caius.'

64. *Makes.* See note on II. iii. 173 & IV. ii. 175.

Des. He found it then;
I never gave it him: send for him hither;
Let him confess a truth.
Oth. He hath confess'd.
Des. What, my lord?
Oth. That he hath — us'd thee.
Des. How? unlawfully?
Oth. Ay.
Des. He will not say so.
Oth. No, his mouth is stopp'd;
Honest Iago hath ta'en order for 't.
Des. Oh! my fear interprets! — what! is he dead?
Oth. Had all his hairs been lives, my great revenge
Had stomach for them all.
Des. Alas! he is betray'd, and I undone!
Oth. Out, strumpet! weep'st thou for him to my face?
Des. Oh, banish me, my lord, but kill me not!
Oth. Down, strumpet!
Des. Kill me to-morrow; let me live to-night!
Oth. Nay, if you strive,—
Des. But half an hour!
Oth. Being done, there is no pause.

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72. *Hath ta'en order for 't.* Has taken measures (in pursuance of order). Has seen to it (under my orders). Cf. *Rich. III.* IV. ii. 53: 'I will take order for her keeping close.'

73. *My fear interprets!* See ll. 37-9 above.

76. *Betray'd.* Falsely incriminated and killed; become the victim of a foul and false accusation. *Undone* — because Cassio is no longer available to bear witness to her innocence.

77. *Weep'st ... my face.* Othello has misunderstood Desdemona's words, 'Alas! he is betray'd, and I undone!' He takes them as an involuntary confession of her guilt: 'Some one has treacherously revealed the secret about Cassio's intimacy with me, and I am ruined!'

81. *If you strive,* — i. e., struggle, resist, — Othello lays his hand here on the dagger so as to threaten that he would use it. It is absurd to suppose that he is going to add 'I must use more force.'

82. *Being done, there is no pause.* Once begun, there must be no stopping. 'My deed of retribution being once put into execution, there must

Des. But while I say one prayer!
Oth. It is too late.
[*Smothers her.*

EMILIA *at the door.*

Emil. My lord, my lord! what, ho! my lord, my lord!
Oth. What noise is this?—Not dead? not yet quite dead?
I that am cruel am yet merciful;
I would not have thee linger in thy pain.—
So, so.
Emil. [*Within*] What, ho! my lord, my lord!
Oth. Who 's there?
Emil. [*Within*] Oh, good my lord, I would speak a word with you!

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be no pause in completing it' (The Cowden-Clarkes).

83. *It is too late.* After this, the 1st quarto has a line [*Des.* O Lord, Lord, Lord.] which is omitted in the folio, (Tollet and Malone surmise on account of the Statute of 1605 against the profane use of the name of God in stage-plays, etc.) It is not unlikely that the omission was made by the poet to avoid any objection as to the possibility of words and articulate sounds being uttered in the circumstances. Anyhow, as Steevens has suggested, an editor may be excused from inserting the line (which the poet himself omitted), there being no need to add to the terror or pathos of the situation; and as a rule, it is omitted in all modern editions. The scene is quite appalling and unbearable enough with the horrible sight of the smothering which spreads its effect to the spectators, and the feeble groans of helpless agony, uttered by the poor victim who is overpowered, are sufficient to make people swoon.

88. *So, so.* These words have given rise to much discussion. The question which has to be solved here is, whether Othello repeats his smothering, or whether he stabs Desdemona. The tradition of the stage is that Othello stabs her with a dagger, and Knight thinks it most probable that Shakespeare intended it. Delius thinks, however, in the absence of any hint or express stage direction to that effect, we must suppose only that Othello repeats the smothering; and the Cowden-Clarkes believe that 'So, so' may merely be intended to represent that Othello 'heaps more clothes around her, pressing the pillow more closely upon the mouth.' Critics have argued the case both for and against smothering, as well as stabbing, and pointed out difficulties both ways. A smothered person, it is said, could not be pale in the face (l. 272: 'Pale as thy smock'), but should be black or of a violet hue; and once a smothered person recovered

the power of utterance, he would probably survive and not die without fresh violence (as Desdemona does, after speaking in ll. 117, 122 & 124-5). On the other hand, it is urged that stabbing would leave the face pale, and the victim might, after seeming dead and motionless for a while, speak a few words before actual death supervenes, but there should be stains of blood on the clothing and 'pale as thy *smock*' in l. 272 would be impossible; and besides, Othello had expressly declared that he would 'not shed her blood' (l. 3) and his subsequent utterance (ll. 200-1. 'there lies your niece Whose breath, indeed, these hands have newly stopp'd') shows that he did not depart from that intention. Furness proposed to remove the dilemma by expert opinion, and accordingly stated the case to no less than seven medical sages, whose views he has published in his *Variorum* Edition. The attention of these gentlemen was drawn to the several words and passages in the scene which went in support of either theory and the following questions were sent to them for solution.

1. Do you think it likely that Othello stabbed Desdemona at 'So so'? 2. If he stabbed her, could her smock be pale? 3. If she were smothered, could she be pale? 4. In either case, could she speak after apparent death? 5. If she could speak, why did she not quite revive? 6. From what cause, then, did she really die?

One of the seven doctors considers the circumstances as inconsistent both with smothering and stabbing and contents himself with supposing that "Shakespeare cared little for realism when he desired an explanatory dramatic effect." Five pronounce emphatically in favour of smothering only and explain the pallor of the face as the effect of shock or as not unknown in cases of smothering, tracing the death to 'broken heart' or 'cardiac exhaustion', one of them (Dr William Hunt) positively attributing it to "the fracture of the cricoid cartilege of the larynx" — a subject on which years ago it appears he had written an 'Article' which he says 'is quoted as authority to this day.' "Othello," says this learned doctor, "true to his stated purpose, did not 'shed her blood, nor scar that whiter skin of hers than snow.' He first tried a very ineffectual method of smothering with pillows. His poor victim was simply dazed, 'not dead.' Seeing this, he grasps her neck with his powerful hands, his thumbs being over the larynx, and with two strong squeezes and a 'so, so,' garrotes her." Heaven have mercy on us! The cricoid doctor goes on to explain that after this horrid fracture of the cartilege, temporary revival and even speech in a hoarse voice was quite possible, and compassionately adds: "Tracheotomy was the only thing that might have saved her, but there was nobody there to perform it, and the chance was slim." It is no small relief to find that one (though only one) of the seven learned authorities has grasped the real situation. After explaining that the pallor of the countenance is contrary to the customary conception of death by strangulation (though paleness is not altogether unknown in such cases) and that the recovery of consciousness

[88. *So, so.*]

and the power of speech after smothering cannot consist with the death which followed immediately after, Dr J. M. Da Costa observes: "If the stage tradition of her being also stabbed be admitted as correct, a view suggests itself which removes all difficulties. The effect of the bleeding would be to relieve the cerebral and pulmonary congestion occurring in strangulation. She revives sufficiently to speak; the internal hemorrhage continues; she dies exhausted, and as always in death from loss of blood, with extreme pallor marked. '*Pale as thy smock' Othello might well say; nor need a poet's words be so literally construed as to exclude the thought of some blood-stains on the white garment;* though in point of fact a stab severing large vessels in the chest may prove fatal without giving rise to external bleeding. The *stabbing subsequent to the smothering* makes, then, the death of Desdemona one which is described with the closest attention to truth. Whether the stage tradition represents Shakespeare's thought is of course, an open question. There is that in the text, however, which supports the supposition of the *stabbing, notwithstanding Othello's first declared intention of not shedding blood. He sees her linger, and he determines on quick decisive measures.* The words 'So, so,' when he is supposed to stab her, are short abrupt expressions, very suitable to rapid, sudden movements as in stabbing." [The italics are mine. Surely, there was no need to call in a doctor's aid to discover the stabbing! Othello had already laid his hand on the dagger when Desdemona strove to resist the smothering. (l. 81. 'Nay, if you strive, —); but the poor creature's utter submission prevented him from drawing it and his hands were allowed to perpetrate their cruel act. Desdemona was all but dead with the shock and the smothering; there was but slight motion in her body and the feeblest groaning, and she should probably have died even if Othello had left her alone. Just then a rap at the door and an indistinct call in a low voice. Othello turns round towards the door and says, 'What noise is this?' Some one is evidently calling and he should open the door. He looks at Desdemona and observing her lingering condition, says: 'Not dead? not yet quite dead? I that am cruel am yet merciful; I would not have thee linger in thy pain. — So, so.' He must make sure of her death before he opens the door and he feels, too, the cruelty of the smothering which makes her gasp for breath and groan in agony. Is it to be expected that he would repeat the same brutal act, and would it be a *speedy* process of ending her life, and a *merciful* one, too, for he 'would not have her linger in her pain?' Would it not be absurd to suppose that, at the words 'So, so,' Othello 'presses a pillow more closely against the victim's mouth' (The Cowden-Clarkes)? And could it be imagined for a moment that he 'kneels on her breast to hasten her death' (Salvini), or — God save the mark! — snaps the cricoid cartilege with his thumbs (Dr. William Hunt)? Would it not be mercy if he uses the dagger and is it not the fatal wounds Othello presently inflicts on his wife and

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the blood that gushes out which make him feel the certainty of her death and break out into a heart-rending lament ?—

> "My wife! my wife! what wife? I have no wife.
> Oh, insupportable! Oh, heavy hour!
> Methinks it should be now a huge eclipse
> Of sun and moon, and the affrighted globe
> Should yawn at alteration."

Who that has eyes cannot see the yawning wounds that proclaim the murderous deed? Othello indeed draws the curtains down before he admits Emilia into the chamber, but she has only to approach the bedstead to notice the horrible sight — not, forsooth, of a smothered lady who talks a few words in a feeble voice, but — of wounds and blood which speak of a murderous deed and reveal the stern certainty of death. 'Oh, who hath done *this deed?*' she asks, and Desdemona utters her dying words in reply, 'Nobody: I myself.' What *deed* could have revealed itself to Emilia's vision or any other sense, if there were no wounds and no blood which proclaimed an act of murder? How could she *perceive a deed* of mere smothering and did Desdemona's reply — 'Nobody: I myself (did the deed)' — mean 'I have *strangled myself*'? Do not the words 'This deed of thine' which Emilia repeats later on (l. 159), and Grataino's reference to 'This sight' (l. 206) clearly point to something more than an *invisible* act of smothering which is supposed or reported to have ended the life of Desdemona? Do they not clearly show *visible* death on the bed — a corpse with wounds and blood? Why did not Othello smother Desdemona again and again when she disclosed signs of life and spoke no less than three times to Emilia? And what made him think that further smothering was unnecessary and that her death was assured? And why did not Emilia go to help her mistress to recover her breath and life if possible, instead of heaping abuse upon Othello and cursing him? And why did not Gratiano and Montano send for the surgeon or do something to restore life if possible, or at least satisfy themselves by close examination of the strangled body that life was extinct? The truth is that the wounds and the blood plainly spoke murder and death to their eyes. Can there be any doubt that Lodovico's words '*Oh, bloody period*' (l. 355) include Desdemona's no less than Emilia's and Othello's blood, and can any one that has eyes, I repeat, fail to see the *bloody wounds* on the *three* corpses when the same person says later on: 'The object poisons sight. Let it be hid'? And why should not Othello, looking at the pale face of Desdemona, exclaim 'Pale as thy smock!' if his eyes fell on a portion of the garment which was not stained with blood? And was it not quite natural that Othello, who had rudely and violently used his hands to smother the feeble Desdemona, should, impressed as he was with the cruelty of his deed, look upon it as *the* deed, *the* murder, and confess to it as such to Gratiano, saying, — 'There lies your niece Whose breath, indeed, these hands have newly stopped'?

Oth. Yes; — 't is Emilia. — By and by. — She 's dead.— 91
'T is like she comes to speak of Cassio's death:
The noise was high. — Ha! no more moving? 93
Still as the grave. — Shall she come in? were 't good?—
I think she stirs again: no. What 's best to do?
If she come in, she 'll sure speak to my wife.
My wife! my wife! what wife? I have no wife.
Oh, insupportable! Oh, heavy hour! 98
Methinks it should be now a huge eclipse
Of sun and moon, and that the affrighted globe
Should yawn at alteration.

Emil. [*Within*] I do beseech you
That I may speak with you, oh, good my lord!

Oth. I had forgot thee. Oh, come in, Emilia.—
Soft; by and by. — Let me the curtains draw.— 104
[*Unlocks the door.*
Where art thou?

Enter EMILIA.

What 's the matter with thee now?

Was it necessary he should speak of the stabbing as well, and what if he believed that the smothering had killed her in fact, though the stabbing prevented her lingering?]

91. *By and by.* Presently.

93. *The noise was high.* Differing from Booth who thinks that the noise was that of 'the struggling with Desdemona whose cries were mingled with Othello's angry voice,' and from Irving who supposes it to refer to Emilia's knock, Furness asks 'Does not this refer to Roderigo's attack on Cassio?' [Yes, certainly, as we shall see from the Exposition.]

99-101. *Methinks ... alteration.* 'Darkness is upon me as though the world were suffering from some long eclipse, and were rent asunder with fright at the change' (Deighton). Theobald blames the poet of 'profanation,' seeing in the passage an allusion to the *solemn* circumstances recorded in *St. Matth.* xxvii, as having accompanied and followed the crucifixion of Christ. "From the sixth hour there was *darkness over all the land* until the ninth hour. ... (When Jesus yielded up the ghost), the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the *rocks rent;* and the *graves* were *opened,*" &c.

Emil. Oh, my good lord, yonder 's foul murthers done!
Oth. What, now?
Emil. But now, my lord.
Oth. It is the very error of the moon;
She comes more nearer earth than she was wont,
And makes men mad.
Emil. Cassio, my lord, hath kill'd a young Venetian
Call'd Roderigo.
Oth. Roderigo kill'd!
And Cassio kill'd!
Emil. No, Cassio is not kill'd.
Oth. Not Cassio kill'd! then murther 's out of tune,
And sweet revenge grows harsh.
Des. Oh, falsely, falsely murder'd!
Emil. Alas, what cry is that?
Oth. That? what?

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109. *Error.* Aberration; wandering out of the proper path.

115-6. *Then murder's out of tune ... harsh.* A musical metaphor. *Murder* is compared to a musical instrument which gives the sweet music of revenge when its strings which consist of the lives of its victims are in harmony with each other. In the present case, the instrument is out of tune, the strings attached to it (the lives of Desdemona and Roderigo) not being in concord: the music which has resulted is accordingly harsh. If Cassio's life had been in the place of Roderigo's, the strings would have been in perfect harmony and the usual sweet music of revenge would have ensued; but, as it is, one of the strings is a wrong one, sweet music is missing and what has been produced is harsh to the soul's ear. Othello proceeded to the murder of Desdemona and was in hot haste about it under the impression that Iago had kept his word and dispatched Cassio (V. i. 31-6), but now that he learns that it is Roderigo, not Cassio who was killed, he feels that, far from satisfying his revenge, the events have merely created bitter agony in his soul. Murder has missed its object and gone wrong in one part and its partial success in the other only galls Othello the more bitterly. It will be seen from the Exposition that, far from hungering for Cassio's life, Othello now feels sorry for his hasty extinction of Desdemona's.

117. *Oh, falsely, falsely murder'd!* The bleeding consequent on stabbing relieves the pulmonary congestion which smothering had produced, and Desdemona, revived to consciousness, is able to utter a few words. This exclamation is about herself, her innocence, and she addresses it to

Emil. Out, and alas! that was my lady's voice.—
Help! help, ho! help!—Oh, lady, speak again!
Sweet Desdemona! Oh, sweet mistress, speak!
Des. A guiltless death I die. 122
Emil. Oh, who hath done this deed?
Des. Nobody: I myself. Farewell!
Commend me to my kind lord; oh, farewell! [*Dies.*
Oth. Why, how should she be murder'd?
Emil. Alas, who knows?
Oth. You heard her say herself, it was not I.
Emil. She said so; I must needs report the truth.
Oth. She 's like a liar gone to burning hell;
'T was I that kill'd her. 130
Emil. Oh, the more angel she, and you the blacker devil!
Oth. She turn'd to folly, and she was a whore.
Emil. Thou dost belie her, and thou art a devil. 133
Oth. She was false as water.

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her husband who she believes is near her. (She repeats it presently in another form, 'A guiltless death I die'). Emilia, whom Othello kept outside the door and was talking to in a low voice, is startled by Desdemona's words and rushes in, pushing Othello aside from the doorway. 'Out, and alas! that was my lady's voice.'

125. *Commend me to my lord.* Give my love to my lord. 'Give my commendation to him,' or, 'say that I commend myself to him,' meaning that 'I commit and recommend myself to his affectionate remembrance' (Craik.)

126. *Why, how should ... murder'd?* What is the matter, how has it happened that she lies murdered?—Can you guess who has murdered her and why? As Emilia stands bewildered at the sight of the murdered lady, Othello speaks to her in this half-mocking, half-puzzling strain, in the strong confidence that, though he had done a most brutal deed, it was not without the fullest justification.

131. *The more angel she*—for having spoken the holy lie with a view to shield you.

132. *Folly.* 'Wantonness,' 'unchastity.' See II. i. 137 and Cf. *R. of L.* 556: 'Her sad behaviour feeds his vulture folly.'

134. *False as water.* 'The comparison is as old as Jacob's farewell to his sons: Reuben, unstable as water.—Gen. XLIX. 4' (Purnell). Cf. *Tr. & Cr.* III. ii. 198-9: 'as false As air, as water, wind, or sandy earth.'

Emil. Thou art rash as fire, to say
That she was false; oh, she was heavenly true!
Oth. Cassio did top her: ask thy husband else.
Oh, I were damn'd beneath all depth in hell,
But that I did proceed upon just grounds
To this extremity. Thy husband knew it all.
Emil. My husband!
Oth. Thy husband.
Emil. That she was false to wedlock?
Oth. Ay, with Cassio:
Had she been true,
If heaven would make me such another world
Of one entire and perfect chrysolite,
I 'd not have sold her for 't.
Emil. My husband!
Oth. Ay,
'T was he that told me on her first;
An honest man he is, and hates the slime
That sticks on filthy deeds.
Emil. My husband!
Oth. What needs this iterance, woman? I say thy husband.

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145. *Chrysolite.* Furness quotes from Holland's translation of Pliny's *Natural Historie,* XXXVII. viii., and adds that it was the story of the precious statue referred to therein which suggested 'chrysolite' to Shakespeare. The passage runs: 'The Topaze or Chrysolith, hath a singular green colour by it selfe, for which it is esteemed very rich, and when it was first found, it surpassed all others in price. . . . . It is said, that the first that tooke a liking vnto the stone, was queen *Berenice* the mother of *Ptolome* the second, and that by the meanes of *Philemon* (lieutenant generall to her son in those countries) who presented one of them to the said queen. Of which Chrysolit, *Ptolomæus Philadelphus* K. of Egypt, caused the statue of his wife *Arsinoë* to be made, 4 cubits long; and in honour of the said queene his wife, dedicated it in a chappell named the Golden temple.'

149. *My husband!* "Emilia's astonishment here is sufficient proof that she did not before suspect Iago being the 'eternal villain' that had 'devised this slander'" (Rolfe). See note on IV. ii. 131-4.

150. *Iterance.* Iteration (the quarto reading); repetition.

Emil. Oh, mistress, villany hath made mocks with love!—
My husband say that she was false!
Oth. He, woman;
I say thy husband: dost understand the word?
My friend, thy husband, honest, honest Iago.
Emil. If he say so, may his pernicious soul
Rot half a grain a day! he lies to the heart;
She was too fond of her most filthy bargain.
Oth. Ha!
Emil. Do thy worst;
This deed of thine is no more worthy heaven
Than thou wast worthy her.
Oth. Peace! you were best.
Emil. Thou hast not half that power to do me harm
As I have to be hurt. Oh, gull! oh, dolt!
As ignorant as dirt! thou hast done a deed,
(I care not for thy sword) I 'll make thee known
Though I lost twenty lives.— Help! help, ho! help!
The Moor hath kill'd my mistress! Murther! murther!

Enter MONTANO, GRATIANO, IAGO, *and others.*

Mon. What is the matter?— How now, general!

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151. *Villany ... love.* That is, played pranks with love, made a fool of love, brought love into ridicule. 'Played off its false tricks upon true affection' (The Cowden-Clarkes).

156. *Rot half a grain a day!* 'Be subject to the most lingering torture' (Deighton).

157. *Her most filthy bargain.* Referring to Othello.

160. *You were best.* It were best for you (to hold your peace).

161-2. *Thou hast not ... hurt.* That is, as I have power to endure being hurt. 'I have in this cause power to endure more than thou hast power to inflict' (Johnson). 'My love for my mistress will give me courage to endure the very utmost you can do to me.' Cf. 2 *Hen. VI.* IV. i. 130: 'More can I bear than you dare execute;' and *Hen. VIII.* III. ii. 387: 'I am able now, methinks, Out of a fortitude of soul, I feel, To endure more miseries and greater far Than my weak-hearted enemies dare offer.'

Emil. Oh, are you come, Iago? you have done well,
That men must lay their murthers on your neck.
Gra. What is the matter?
Emil. Disprove this villain, if thou be'st a man:
He says thou told'st him that his wife was false:
I know thou didst not, thou 'rt not such a villain.
Speak, for my heart is full.
Iago. I told him what I thought, and told no more
Than what he found himself was apt and true.
Emil. But did you ever tell him she was false?
Iago. I did.
Emil. You told a lie, an odious, damnèd lie;
Upon my soul, a lie, a wicked lie!
She false with Cassio!—did you say with Cassio?
Iago. With Cassio, mistress. Go to, charm your tongue.
Emil. I will not charm my tongue; I am bound to speak:
My mistress here lies murder'd in her bed,—
All. Oh, heavens forfend!
Emil. And your reports have set the murther on.
Oth. Nay, stare not, masters; it is true, indeed.
Gra. 'T is a strange truth.
Mon. Oh, monstrous act!
Emil. Villany, villany, villany!
I think upon 't, — I think I smell 't;— oh, villany!—

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169. *Neck* — shoulders, as we should now say.

171. See note on IV. ii. 131-4 and on l. 149 above.

176. *Apt.* Natural and likely. See II. i. 287.

182. *Charm.* Restrain, as with a charm or spell. Cf. *T. of S.* I. i. 214: 'I will charm him first to keep his tongue;' *id.* IV. ii. 58: 'To tame a shrew and charm her chattering tongue;' 3 *Hen. VI.* V. v. 31: 'Peace, wilful boy, or I will charm your tongue.'

184-192. *My mistress ... villany.* These lines are not in the 1st quarto.

188. *Strange.* 'Monstrous', 'incredible,' Cf. I. iii. 160, where it means 'incredible,' 'wonderful.'

I thought so then! — I 'll kill myself for grief.— 191
Oh, villany, villany!
Iago. What, are you mad? I charge you, get you home.
Emil. Good gentlemen, let me have leave to speak;
'T is proper I obey him, but not now.
Perchance, Iago, I will ne'er go home.
Oth. Oh! oh! oh! [*He falls on the bed.*
Emil. Nay, lay thee down and roar;
For thou hast kill'd the sweetest innocent 198
That e'er did lift up eye.
Oth. [*Rising*] Oh, she was foul!—
I scarce did know you, uncle; there lies your niece,
Whose breath, indeed, these hands have newly stopp'd.
I know this act shows horrible and grim. 202
Gra. Poor Desdemon! I am glad thy father 's dead.

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191. *Then.* When I gave that handkerchief to my husband: "Even *then* Emilia appears to have suspected it was sought after for no honest purpose, and there asks her husband: 'What will you do with it?' &c., III. iii. 314." (Steevens). The Cowden-Clarkes think that Emilia alludes to "her suspicions at IV. ii. 131; she seems to be about to say, 'I thought then that there was villany going on, but little thought my husband was the author.' The very thought that Iago could be capable of such villany, causes her to interrupt her half-uttered sentence with 'I'll kill myself for grief.'" [The Cowden-Clarkes are undoubtedly mistaken in their surmise. It is not the thought that her husband has now shown himself such a great villain that makes Emilia say, 'I'll kill myself for grief,' but the feeling and fear she now entertains that *she has been the cause of her mistress's death.* She now smells, *not* her husband's *villany* (that is clear on his own statement) but *how* he accomplished it, and feels almost certain that he had sought and obtained the handkerchief and used it for his villanous purpose. Iago sees the danger and charges her to get home, but she will not, and craves leave to speak — what? — (certainly not that she already thought that villany was going on, &c., but) her tale about the handkerchief, and her suspicions that her husband had employed it in the villany he has perpetrated.]

199. *Lift up eye.* Carries an implication of good and holy life.

201. *Newly.* Just now.

203. *Thy father's dead.* Furness, quoting Delius who says, 'Gratiano appears to have come to Cyprus to bring to Desdemona the news of her

Thy match was mortal to him, and pure grief 204
Shore his old thread in twain. Did he live now,
This sight would make him do a desperate turn,
Yea, curse his better angel from his side, 207
And fall to reprobance.
Oth. 'T is pitiful; but yet Iago knows
That she with Cassio hath the act of shame
A thousand times committed; Cassio confess'd it: 211
And she did gratify his amorous works

Father's death,' remarks parenthetically: "In that the 'gentle lady' never knew of her Father's death, is the one tiny glimmering ray of comfort in this blackness." One would like to ask, when did Gratiano come to Cyprus? where did he lodge? why did he go seek Cassio that night (V. i. 81) and how did it happen that he had not yet seen Desdemona and broken the sad news to her? And why did not Lodovico do it? All these matters will become clear when the veil is removed in the Exposition.

204. *Match* — marriage. *Mortal* — deadly.

205. *Shore.* Sheared, cut; alluding to the thread of life which the Fates were supposed to spin and cut. 'The Greeks and Romans supposed there were three Parcæ or Fates, who arbitrarily controlled the birth, events, and death of every man: . . . . . . These were Clotho (who held the distaff), Lachesis (who spun the thread of life) and Atropos (who cut it off when life was ended.)' — *Brewer.*

206. *A desperate turn.* That is, commit suicide. It cannot mean 'killing Othello' because Gratiano, who says this about his brother, as yet knows nothing about the falsity of the charge against Desdemona. Gratiano means to say: 'Poor Desdemon! your old father could not outlive the grief which your marriage caused him; but if he did, the grief of your death — and such a death too! — would have driven him to end his life by suicide.'

207. *Curse ... side.* That is, drive away by the sinful deed. The allusion is to the popular belief that each human being is accompanied on his way through life by two angels, his better angel urging him to do good, and his worse angel inciting him to do evil. Cf. *Sonn.* CXLIV. 6: My female evil Tempteth my better angel from my side.'

208. *Reprobance.* Reprobation (the quarto reading). 'Perdition, eternal damnation' (Schmidt). See l. 150 above.

211. *A thousand times.* An indefinite expression for 'many times.' 'Used here to convey the expression of long time' (The Cowden-Clarkes). See note on III. iii. 292.

212. *Gratify.* Reward, recompense gratefully.

With that recognizance and pledge of love
Which I first gave her. I saw it in his hand;
It was a handkerchief; an antique token
My father gave my mother.

Emil. Oh, heaven! oh, heavenly powers!

Iago. Come, hold your peace.

Emil. 'T will out, 't will out! — I peace!
No, I will speak as liberal as the north;
Let heaven and men and devils, let them all,
All, all, cry shame against me, yet I 'll speak.

Iago. Be wise, and get you home.

I will not.

[*Iago offers to stab Emilia.*

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213. *Recognizance.* Token.

216. *My father gave my mother.* Steevens remarks: "In III. iv. 55, Othello says that 'an Egyptian' gave this handkerchief to his Mother; and here he says it was his father. This has been censured as an oversight in Shakespeare, but perhaps it is only a fresh proof of his art. The first account of the handkerchief as given by Othello, was purposely ostentatious, in order to alarm his wife the more. When he mentions it a second time, the truth was sufficient for his purpose." And the Cowden-Clarkes observe: "Even this slight deviation from truth on the part of Othello works its own retribution. Had he not over-excited the gentle lady's fears by his description of the handkerchief and startled her by his peremptoriness in demanding it she might not have been tempted to prevaricate and tell a falsehood." [But *did* she really prevaricate and tell a falsehood? As regards Othello: Suppose the Egyptian charmer had brought the handkerchief to Othello's mother and explained its extraordinary virtues and demanded a fancy price for it, and Othello's mother took the handkerchief to her husband and prevailed upon him to buy it for her, and he did buy it to please her, and presented it to her as a token, and suppose Othello knew all this history of the handkerchief, would the inconsistency be cured? In that case, might not Othello say that his mother got the handkerchief from an Egyptian charmer, especially when he recounted its virtues according to the catalogue? And might not he, when he was talking of it as his love-token to Desdemona, say that it was his father's gift to his mother?]

219. *Liberal as the north.* 'As free and unfettered in my speech as the north wind in its blasts' (Deighton). As freely and vehemently as the north wind in its blasts. Cf. *Rich. II.* II. i. 229: 'a liberal tongue;' *Cymb.* I. iii. 36: 'the tyrannous breathing of the north Shakes all our buds from growing.'

Gra. Fie!
Your sword upon a woman?
Emil. Oh, thou dull Moor! that handkerchief thou speak'st of
I found by fortune and did give my husband;
For often, with a solemn earnestness,
(More than indeed belong'd to such a trifle)
He begg'd of me to steal it.
Iago. Villanous whore!
Emil. She give it Cassio! no, alas! I found it,
And I did give 't my husband.
Iago Filth, thou liest!
Emil. By heaven, I do not, I do not, gentlemen.
Oh, murd'rous coxcomb! what should such a fool
Do with so good a wife?
Oth. Are there no stones in heaven
But what serve for the thunder?—Precious villain!
[*He runs at Iago; Iago stabs Emilia and runs out. Montano disarms Othello.*

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225. *Fortune.* Accident.

232. *Coxcomb.* 'Equivalent here to fool in its strongest sense' (Rolfe).

Such a fool. The reference is to Othello. Emilia says that Desdemona was too good a wife for a fool like Othello who could not understand her noble and virtuous character. What should such a fool do with such a good wife but suspect her character and murder her!

233-4. *Are there no stones ... thunder?* Commentators give these lines a very poor meaning by making Othello pray for a thunderbolt to strike Iago down. Malone explains: "Has not heaven one supernumerary bolt, to hurl directly at the head of this atrocious villain? Must all the stores of its arsenal be reserved for common and ordinary thunder?" The Cowden-Clarkes explain: "Hath heaven no bolts wherewith to punish this miscreant as well as to denounce his crime?" [The real fact is that Othello utters these words in self-condemnation, under a most bitter consciousness of his own rash and inhuman act. What strikes any one at the moment is not the atrocity of Iago's villany but the atrocity and pity of Othello's deed even under the influence of villany. Emilia spares her breath against her husband and heaps all her abuse on Othello, calling him a dull fool and murderous coxcomb who rashly deprived himself of a most loving and virtuous wife. Othello, too, sees what a

Gra. The woman falls; sure, he hath kill'd his wife.
Emil. Ay, ay. Oh, lay me by my mistress' side.
Gra. He 's gone, but his wife 's kill'd.
Mon. 'T is a notorious villain. Take you this weapon,
Which I have here recover'd from the Moor.
Come, guard the door without; let him not pass,
But kill him rather. I 'll after that same villain,
For 't is a damnèd slave. [*Exeunt Mon. and Gra.*

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cruel brute he had made of himself in the hands of a villain, and his immediate passion is not vengeance against Iago but an excruciating agony of remorse. He bows to the abuse of Emilia and prays for an instantaneous destruction of himself by the hand of heaven. 'Oh, that heaven might send a special thunderbolt to annihilate this heartless fool who has murdered a most innocent and loving wife!'—this is the cry of his soul. [Cf. ll. 273 & 276-9 below]: It is impossible for him to endure the anguish for one moment; he must put an end to himself at once. But before doing it, he would strike down the devil who had ensnared his soul. So he flies at Iago, but is thwarted and disarmed by Montano.

Stones ... thunder. Thunder-stones or meteoric stones fall down only in thunder-claps; but Othello prays that heaven should send a special thunder-stone on his head at that very moment though there was no thunder and lightning. Thunderbolts are supposed to be the instruments of heaven for the punishment of atrocious criminals. Cf. *Lear* II. i. 48: 'The avenging gods 'Gainst parricides did all their thunders bend.'

234. *Precious.* Used here not in an ironical sense (it is scarcely a time for irony) as in 'precious varlet' (*Cymb.* IV. ii. 83), but in the colloquial sense of 'egregious,' 'prodigious.'

238. *Notorious.* Notable, egregious. As in IV. ii. 141. 'Iago was not a *notorious* villain in the modern sense of the word, for his villainy had but just then become known' (Rolfe).

239. *Here.* Now; in this attack. *Recovered*—taken.

241. *I 'll after that same villain.* Critics and commentators have pointed out proof after proof of *long time* in this play, but it does not appear to have struck any of them that this Act (and especially this line) completely dispels the delusion of *short time.* Montano was very badly wounded in II. iii. (160, 193-5, 249-250)—that was the night of Othello's arrival at Cyprus. To-night (the night of Desdemona's murder), he is not only able to disarm Othello but *runs in pursuit of Iago.* By what magic process, one would like to ask, did this ex-governor of Cyprus, get cured of his 'dangerous' wounds in the space of four-and-twenty hours, at least sufficiently well to be able to run? Even at a performance, I cannot think that any one who marks the wounds of Montano in II. iii., can be deluded into thinking that the night on which he runs in pursuit of Iago

Oth. I am not valiant neither,
But every puny whipster gets my sword.
But why should honour outlive honesty?
Let it go all.
Emil. What did thy song bode, lady?
Hark, canst thou hear me? I will play the swan,
And die in music. *Willow, willow, willow.*—
Moor, she was chaste; she loved thee, cruel Moor;
So come my soul to bliss, as I speak true:
So speaking — as I think — I die — I die. [*Dies.*
Oth. I have another weapon in this chamber;
It is a sword of Spain, the ice-brook's temper.—

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is the very next night. *Long time* is quite clear, and the actual length of it will be shown in the Exposition.

242-3. *I am not valiant neither ... sword.* I have not only shown myself an utter fool, but I seem to have lost all my valour and courage, for I see that any insignificant weakling can wring my sword from me and I cannot resist him.

243. *Whipster.* Whippersnapper — used contemptuously; 'one no bigger or bulkier than a whip'; a diminutive, insignificant or presumptuous person. Compared with Othello, Montano was small and puny.

244. *Why should honour outlive honesty?* When I have lost my name for honesty (good and just conduct) by committing this foul crime, what matters it if I lose my reputation for valour by allowing myself to be deprived of my sword?

246-7. *I will play the swan ... music.* The belief in the swan's dying song seems to be as old as Plato. Cf. *M. of V.* III. ii. 44: 'Then, if he lose, he makes a swan-like end Fading in music;' *King John*, V. vii. 21: 'I am the cygnet to this pale faint swan, Who chants a doleful hymn to his own death;' *R. of L.* 1611: 'And now this pale swan in her watery nest, Begins the sad dirge of her certain ending.'

249. *So come ... true.* Let my soul go to heaven only if I speak the truth, not otherwise.

252. *A sword of Spain ... temper.* 'Spanish sword-blades were highly esteemed (*R. & J.* I. iv. 84), and the steel of which they were made was tempered by plunging it red-hot into ice-cold water.' (The Cowden-Clarkes). Steevens, quoting Martial and Justinian, identifies the 'ice brook' with the river called Salo (now Xalon), near Bilbilis in Celtiberia. "In this," he says, "the Spaniards plunged all their swords and other weapons while hot from the forge; and to the icy quality of the waters they were indebted for the stubborn temper." *The ice-brook's temper* — tempered by immersion in the ice-brook,

Oh, here it is. — Uncle, I must come forth.
Gra. [*Within*] If thou attempt it, it will cost thee dear;
Thou hast no weapon, and perforce must suffer.
Oth. Look in upon me then, and speak with me,
Or, naked as I am, I will assault thee.

Re-enter GRATIANO.

Gra. What is the matter?
Oth. Behold, I have a weapon;
A better never did itself sustain
Upon a soldier's thigh: I have seen the day,
That with this little arm and this good sword
I have made my way through more impediments
Than twenty times your stop. — But (oh, vain boast!)
Who can control his fate? 't is not so now.—
Be not afraid, though you do see me weapon'd;
Here is my journey's end, here is my butt,
And very sea-mark of my utmost sail.
Do you go back dismay'd? 'T is a lost fear:
Man but a rush against Othello's breast,

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257. *Naked.* 'That is, weaponless, as Gratiano supposes him' (White).

261. *This little arm.* 'Little' because it was one single arm against huge impediments. Othello was himself not a small man but a tall and stately person, as we shall see from the Exposition.

263. *Your stop.* The impediment you can offer. Cf. *Cor.* I. i. 72: "Cracking ten thousand curbs Of more strong link asunder than can ever Appear in your impediment."

264. *Who can control his fate?* "The echo of Desdemona's 'It is my wretched fortune,' IV. ii. 129." (Furness).

266. *Journey* (of life). *Butt.* Goal, limit.

267. *Very sea-mark ... sail.* The extreme point to which my life-voyage may extend. A *sea-mark* is any elevated object on land which serves as a guide to mariners.

268. *'Tis a lost fear.* That is, needless, groundless. You need not fear an attack from me though you see a weapon in my hand.

269. *Man but a rush,* &c. Oppose me but with a reed and I yield. 'An allusion to the mock tournaments in which the combatants were armed with rushes in place of spears.' (Staunton).

And he retires. — Where should Othello go ?
Now, how dost thou look now ? Oh, ill-starr'd wench !
Pale as thy smock ! when we shall meet at compt,
This look of thine will hurl my soul from heaven,
And fiends will snatch at it. Cold, cold, my girl !
Even like thy chastity.
Oh, cursèd, cursèd slave ! Whip me, ye devils,
From the possession of this heavenly sight !
Blow me about in winds ! roast me in sulphur !
Wash me in steep-down gulfs of liquid fire !
O Desdemon ! dead Desdemon ! dead ! oh ! oh !

Enter LODOVICO, CASSIO *carried in a chair,* MONTANO, *and* Officers *with* IAGO, *prisoner*

Lod. Where is this rash and most unfortunate man?
Oth. That 's he that was Othello ; here I am.
Lod. Where is that viper ? bring the villain forth.

---

271. *Wench* — a term of endearment in Shakespeare's time ; now, it is a term of contempt. Cf. III. iii. 313.

272. *Pale as thy smock.* Evidently, there are no stains of blood on the portion of the smock (night-gown) which falls within Othello's vision. See note on l. 88 above.

Compt. 'That is, the reckoning at the Judgment-day' (Dyce).

273. *This look of thine.* This serene look on thy face, speaking thy innocence and chastity.

276. *Oh, cursed, cursed slave !* Just a passing thought about Iago's villany enters Othello's brain, but this only brings home to his mind with double force the folly and rashness of his own cruel deed, and he invokes the devils to subject him to all the worst punishments of hell.

276-7. *Whip me ... sight.* 'Drive me away with scourges from the undeserved privilege of looking upon such a divinely pure sight.'

278. *Blow me about in winds.* Cf. *M. for M.* III. i. 120 :

> "To be imprisoned in the voiceless winds
> And blown with restless violence round about
> The pendent world."

279. *Steep-down.* Precipitous. Shakespeare also uses *steep-up, Sonn.* VII. 5 : 'And having climb'd the steep-up heavenly hill' (Deighton).

280. *O Desdemon !* See note on III. i. 55.

282. *That was ... Othello.* You mean the man that *was* Othello.

Oth. I look down towards his feet; but that 's a fable.
If that thou be'st a devil, I cannot kill thee.
[*Wounds Iago.*

Lod. Wrench his sword from him.

Iago. I bleed, sir, but not kill'd.

Oth. I am not sorry neither: I 'd have thee live;
For, in my sense, 't is happiness to die.

Lod. Oh, thou Othello, that wast once so good,
Fall'n in the practice of a cursèd slave,
What shall be said to thee?

Oth. Why, any thing:
An honourable murderer, if you will;
For naught I did in hate, but all in honour,

Lod. This wretch hath part confess'd his villany.
Did you and he consent in Cassio's death?

Oth. Ay.

Cas. Dear general, I never gave you cause.

Oth. I do believe it, and I ask your pardon.
Will you, I pray, demand that demi-devil
Why he hath thus ensnar'd my soul and body?

Iago. Demand me nothing: what you know, you know;
From this time forth I never will speak word.

---

284. *Look down towards his feet* — to see if they are cloven, the devil being popularly believed to have cloven feet.

That's a fable. That belief is an idle legend.

288. *In my sense.* Judging by my present feelings.

290. *In the practice.* 'In the snare, by the stratagem' (Johnson). Cf. I. iii. 102; III. iv. 140.

294. *Part confess'd.* It is a mistake to think, as some critics do, that Iago confessed a part of his villany in a vein of self-glorification. Why he confessed a part but not everything will be explained in the Exposition. See note on ll. 319-20 below.

295. *Consent in.* 'Plan together, conspire with each other for' (Rolfe).

301-2. *Demand me nothing ... word.* Swinburne remarks: "When once he has said it we know as well as he that thenceforth he never will speak word. We could smile almost as we can see him to have smiled at Gratiano's most ignorant and empty threat, being well assured that torments will in no wise ope his lips: that as surely and as truthfully as

Lod. What, not to pray?
Gra. Torments will ope your lips.
Oth. Well, thou dost best.
Lod. Sir, you shall understand what hath befall'n,
(Which, as I think, you know not). Here is a letter
Found in the pocket of the slain Roderigo,
And here another; the one of them imports
The death of Cassio to be undertook
By Roderigo.
Oth. Oh, villain!
Cas. Most heathenish and most gross!
Lod. Now here 's another discontented paper,
Found in his pocket too; and this, it seems,
Roderigo meant to have sent this damned villain,
But that, belike, Iago in the interim

---

ever did the tortured philosopher before him, he might have told his tormentors that they did but bruise the coating, batter the crust, or break the shell of Iago." This is altogether a mistaken view of Iago's character. It is wrong to suppose that Iago sticks to his determination not to speak, or that torments *are* needed to "ope his lips." He speaks very soon and of his own accord as we shall see in the Exposition.

305. *You shall understand what hath befall'n.* Critics and commentators do not seem to have fully grasped the aim and occasion of the letters which are introduced here. Some have even considered them unnecessary rehearsing as they do "only what is already known to the audience" — (yes, to the *audience*, but not to Othello, Gratiano and others who were not watching the play with the audience!) Brandes seems to ignore the relation between the *dénouement* of a drama and the *dramatis personæ* when he observes that the information which Lodovico gives about the letters is "superfluous for the spectator" and suspects that the portion of the text containing it, is an interpolation and ought to be expunged! He even goes the length of saying that the speeches in that part are "nerveless and feeble and detract from the effect of the scene" and form "a stain on the poet's flawless work of art." The Exposition will show when and why these letters were written and how their discovery here is absolutely necessary to prepare the nemesis upon Iago by furnishing the links of evidence against him.

308. *Imports.* Indicates.

312. *Discontented.* 'Full of dissatisfaction' (Schmidt); expressing discontent.

315. *Belike.* Probably,

Came in and satisfied him.
Oth. Oh, thou pernicious caitiff !—
How came you, Cassio, by that handkerchief
That was my wife's ?
Cas. I found it in my chamber ;
And he himself confess'd but even now
That there he dropt it for a special purpose
Which wrought to his desire.
Oth. Oh, fool ! fool ! fool !

---

316. *Satisfied him.* 'Gave him enough ; killed him' (White). The meaning is 'pacified his discontent' — by putting an end to him as we see, not by any explanation. As a matter of fact, Iago had *satisfied* Roderigo with his reasons (IV. ii. 242 ; V. i. 9), before he "satisfied" him in the way which Lodovico refers to.

317. *That handkerchief.* It is wrong to suppose here that the handkerchief is visible on Cassio's person, and that Othello points to it when he questions Cassio about it. In that case it would be more natural to have an interrogation after 'handkerchief' (l. 317) and a full stop after wife's' (l. 318). The quarto reading is, 'How came you, Cassio, by *a* handkerchief That was my wife's?' — which clearly shows that Othello does not point to it. When Shakespeare altered '*a*' to '*that*' in the folio and wrote How came you, Cassio, by *that* handkerchief, Which was my wifes?' it should not be supposed that he intended the absurdity of showing the handkerchief on Cassio's person. 'That handkerchief' in the present line has precisely the same force as in l. 48 above and III. iv. 54. Othello questions Cassio in respect of 'that handkerchief' belonging to his wife which he had seen in his hand. (l. 62 above ; IV. i. 153, 168) and Cassio gives his reply identifying it with the handkerchief he had found in his lodging and about which Iago had just then volunteered his information and confession. There is absolutely no warrant for the tradition of the stage which uses the handkerchief as a bandage about Cassio's wounded leg. In V. i. 73, Iago bound it with his shirt and soon afterwards the wound was properly dressed by a surgeon and Cassio makes his appearance at the castle. Besides, as will be seen from the Exposition, the handkerchief was with Bianca. She had quarrelled over it with Cassio in the evening (IV. i. 144-51) and at supper, before Iago went there, the quarrel had been made up, and Bianca took back the handkerchief from her lover to copy out the work, and insisted on doing it though he was not then very particular about it. Can this be ignored and the handkerchief allowed to remain with Cassio, after supper ?

319-20. *He himself confess'd ... special purpose.* Q. What was the special purpose, and why did Iago volunteer this confession ?

321. *Oh, fool ! fool ! fool !* Of course referring to himself.

Cas. There is besides in Roderigo's letter,
How he upbraids Iago that he made him
Brave me upon the watch; whereon it came
That I was cast: and even but now he spake,
(After long seeming dead) Iago hurt him,
Iago set him on.

Lod. You must forsake this room, and go with us:
Your power and your command is taken off,
And Cassio rules in Cyprus. For this slave,
If there be any cunning cruelty
That can torment him much and hold him long,
It shall be his. You shall close prisoner rest,
Till that the nature of your fault be known
To the Venetian state. — Come, bring him away.

Oth. Soft you; a word or two before you go.
I have done the state some service, and they know 't.
No more of that. — I pray you, in your letters,
When you shall these unlucky deeds relate,
Speak of me as I am; nothing extenuate,
Nor set down aught in malice. Then must you speak
Of one that loved not wisely but too well;
Of one not easily jealous, but being wrought
Perplex'd in the extreme; of one whose hand
(Like the base Júdean) threw a pearl away
Richer than all his tribe; of one whose subdued eyes,

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325. *Cast.* Dismissed, cashiered. Cf. I. i. 149; II. iii. 14, 269.

329. *Taken off.* Taken away.

331. *Cunning cruelty.* Any torture skilfully contrived.

338. *No more of that.* That is all I will say about it. I do not wish to boast of the service I have done the state.

340. *Extenuate.* Palliate.

341. *In malice.* Out of hatred or ill-will.

343. *Wrought.* Worked upon.

344. *Perplex'd.* (Was) bewildered and tormented with doubts.

345. *Like the base Júdean.* This is the last passage in the play, over which commentators are at loggerheads with each other. The reading of the 1st folio is, 'Like the base Iudean' *(Júdean)*, which is given

[345. *Like the base Júdean*]

above. The 1st quarto has 'Like the base *Indian*,' which is followed by the later quartos and folios. Now, the question is, which is the word Sheakspeare wrote — 'Júdean' or 'Indian'? Theobald, Warburton, Malone and others uphold the reading of the 1st folio and, taking *pearl* metaphorically to mean *a fine woman*, refer to the story of Herod, king of Judea, who, in a fit of blind jealousy, threw away his "jewel" of a wife, Mariamne. They urge that *Judean* is supported by the word *tribe* which follows, and that *base* aptly conveys the popular contempt for the Jews. On the other hand, Boswell, Coleridge and others accept the quarto reading (and most modern editors follow them), taking 'base Indian' to refer to the *rude* natives of the West Indies, whose ignorance of the value of gems and pearls is well-known. Heath says: "Even at this day the various tribes of Indians who inhabit the continent of North America, would joyfully exchange the most valuable pearl that might accidentally fall into their hands for a bottle of rum or a flask of gunpowder." Boswell cites in favour of *Indian* Habington's *Castara:*

"So the unskilfull Indian those bright gems
Which might adde majestie to diadems
'Mong the waves scatters;"

and Sir Edward Howard's *The Woman's Conquest:*

"Behold my queen—
Who with no more concern I'le cast away
Than Indians do a pearl that ne're did know
Its value."

And Coleridge, referring to Warburton's note, remarks: "Thus it is for no-poets to comment on the greatest of poets! To make Othello say that he, who had killed his wife, was like Herod, who killed Mariamne!— Oh, how many beauties, in this one line, were impenetrable to the ever thought-swarming, but idealess Warburton! Othello wishes to excuse himself on the score of ignorance, and yet not to excuse himself, — to excuse himself by accusing. The struggle of feeling is finely conveyed in the word 'base' which is applied to the rude Indian, not in his own character, but as the momentary representative of Othello's. *Indian*,— for I retain the old reading, — means American, a savage *in genere*." Upton thinks that *Indian* is a misprint for *Egyptian* and that the reference is to the story of the Egyptian robber alluded to in *T. N.* V. i. 121. He rejects Theobald's reference to Herod and Mariamne, pointing out that there is very little resemblance between the two stories: not only is Othello a private murderer while Herod brought his wife to public justice, but, unlike Desdemona, the Jewess hated her husband and always treated him with scorn and contempt. Steevens remarks that Othello does not mention "many things but what he might fairly have been allowed to have had knowledge of in the course of his peregrinations. Of this kind are the similes of the Euxine sea flowing into the Propontick, and the

[345. *Like the base Júdean*]

Arabian trees dropping their gums. The rest of his speeches are more free from mythological and historical allusions than almost any to be found in Shakespeare, for he is never quite clear from them; though in the design of this character he seems to have meant it for one who had spent a greater part of the life in the field, than in the cultivation of any other knowledge than what would be of use to him in his military capacity." The inference would be that there can be no allusion to any story of Herod and Mariamne, which Othello, born a Moor and brought up in the field was not likely to have heard. Collier points out that in G. Fenton's translation of *Guevara*, 1582, p. 277, 'Judea' is misprinted *India*, — 'Titus having subdued the country of India, and taken the great city of Hierusalem,' &c.— which would rather show that the true reading is *Judean*. [And it is very unlikely that 'Indian' can get misprinted *Judean*.] Knight, calling attention to the fact that throughout the folio edition, where 'Indian' occurs, it is found invariably spelt *I-n-d-i-a-n*, and therefore, to assert that *Iudean* is a misprint for *Indian*, we have to assume not only that *u* got substituted for *n* but also *e* for *i*, remarks: "To show how far conjecture may be carried, we may mention that a correspondent wishes to impress upon us that the allusion was to Judas Iscariot." It was however reserved for Halliwell-Phillips to urge this as the true explanation, notwithstanding that the idea had been ridiculed; and Furness, agreeing with the learned scholar, adds: "Is there not suggestion even in the identity of the two first syllables, *Jud*as and *Jud*ean? Once before in this Scene, Othello's agonized thoughts had turned for a fit comparison to that dread time when the affrighted globe yawned and darkness covered the face of the earth." [There can be little doubt that *Júdean* is the correct reading and that the reference is to *Judas Iscariot*. It may be pointed out that the words, 'Like the base Judean' are enclosed within parentheses in the folio, which is not the case with other similes, e. g., 'Like to the Pontic sea,' &c., III. iii. 453; and the word *tribe* does not really seem to have any relation with *Judean* (or Indian). '*A pearl richer than all his tribe*' does not mean, as commentators generally interpret it, 'a pearl worth more than all the wealth possessed by the tribe,' or 'a pearl richer than all the gems to be found amongst the men of the tribe,' or metaphorically, 'a woman nobler than all the other women of the tribe,' but 'a pearl richer than all *its* (his) tribe, its class, i. e., a pearl more precious than all other pearls, a priceless pearl — metaphorically, the noblest man or woman in creation.' Othello looked upon Desdemona not merely as the finest woman of *her* tribe or race, but as *the finest woman born*: the world had "not a sweeter creature" and she was richer to him than "a whole world of one entire and perfect chrysolite." When he killed her and made himself wifeless, it was chaos in his soul, and though at the moment he believed in her guiltiness, the murder of that meek lady recalled the crucifixion of Christ to his mind, and he felt as if the awful

events of that dread time were going to repeat themselves. Imagine what should be his state of mind, what his agony, when he found that in fact she had been "heavenly true" and he was a murderous coxcomb, a faithless fool who could not appreciate the inviolable virtue of his noble wife. It is no wonder he prays for a thunderbolt to strike him dead on the spot and feels that the cruellest tortures of hell would be none too severe for his crime; for it has come home to him that it is nothing short of Iscariot's. Like that base Judean who had sacrificed the richest pearl among men, he sacrificed the richest pearl among women. Before the priceless pearl he *basely*, treacherously sacrificed, — whose infinite merit he could not realise, — Judas was *base*, low and worthless. And Othello, too, was base and his value was low, very low, before the priceless pearl whose high virtue he had failed to understand, and has he not basely, faithlessly, mercilessly sacrificed it? Indeed Othello had kissed Desdemona and killed her, and Judas, too, kissed his master and betrayed him into the hands of his enemies! Othello may well detest himself and, like Judas (*St. Matth.* xxvii, 5), put an end to his worthless life, as punishment for shedding innocent blood. It is thus quite clear that the simile of Iscariot's crime not only fully expresses Othello's high estimate of Desdemona's worth as a woman but also suits the other circumstances perfectly well, and is besides the most natural idea after once the thoughts are turned to the time of Christ's crucifixion. Apart from the incongruities pointed out by Upton and Steevens, any allusion to the story of Herod and Mariamne cannot express a hundredth part of Othello's love for Desdemona or his infinite agony for her loss, and he would never degrade her by likening her murder to the murder of any other wife. Neither would it be anything better than a bad simile at the best, to compare Othello's loss to an Indian's loss of a priceless pearl. Coleridge, carried away by his gibe at no-poet-Warburton, has scarcely shown his poetic genius to advantage by accepting *Indian* as the true reading and deluding himself by a wrong analysis of Othello's mental condition. One can believe that American Indians are ignorant of the value of pearls and throw them away, but do they afterwards go on weeping for their loss, and did ever any of them kill himself for grief on that account? Is it, one may be permitted to ask, the test of a poet to make or take a simile, to suit only one particular? To be sure, Othello does not here, when he compares himself to the base Judean, disclose any '*struggle of feeling*,' — any 'wish to excuse himself on the score of ignorance, and yet not to excuse himself—to excuse himself by accusing.' Far from it, he introduces the simile to aptly express and acknowledge the baseness and enormity of his deed. The purport of Othello's speech is: 'In your letters to the Venetian state, set down nothing in malice, and extenuate nothing, against me. Do not attribute this deed to my lack of love (for that is not true, I was only too deep in my love) nor to any jealous and suspicious nature in me (for that is not true either;

Albeit unused to the melting mood,
Drop tears as fast as the Arabian trees
Their med'cinable gum. Set you down this;
And say besides, that in Aleppo once,
Where a malignant and turban'd Turk
Beat a Venetian and traduc'd the state,
I took by the throat the circumcised dog
And smote him — thus. [*Stabs himself.*

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not jealous by nature, I was worked upon by a villain and perplexed in the extreme): but do say (and here, do not extenuate your report) that these cruel hands of mine perpetrated this base and heinous crime; that, like Judas Iscariot, I failed to realise the worth of a peerless pearl and sacrificed it. Say, too, that though (like him) I repent my deed and weep for it most bitterly, yet, feeling (as he did) that this worthless life should continue no longer, I do not hesitate to inflict upon myself (the arch-criminal who has murdered an innocent damsel of Venice) the same punishment of death which I once, in Aleppo, had fearlessly inflicted upon a turban'd Turk, for no higher offence than his beating a Venetian and traducing the Venetian state.']

346. *Subdued.* 'Rendered submissive by calamity.'

348. *Drop tears.* 'The sudden deviation from past tense to present tense here has impressive effect; it tends to make the weeping of the noble-natured man and brave soldier the more vividly actual and intense to the imagination of reader or spectator.' (The Cowden-Clarkes).

349. *Med'cinable.* Medicinal, endowed with healing properties.

Gum. 'Probably not gum arabic, but myrrh' (Bucknill). Hunter thinks it is the gum called 'Bernix,' which was used in medicine.

350. *Aleppo.* 'I am told that it is immediate death for a Christian to strike a Turk in Aleppo. Othello is boasting of his own audacity.' (Steevens). [It is almost a sin to charge Othello with boasting at this time. The pertinence of the allusion has been made clear at the close of the note on l. 345 above.]

351. *Turban'd.* "Shakespeare seems to have connected the idea of arrogance with turbans. See in *Cymb.* III. iii. 6: 'that giants may jet through And keep their impious turbans on.'" (Delius).

352. *Traduc'd the state.* Spoke ill of the Venetian state.

354. *Smote him — thus.* Here Othello stabs himself, presumably with the same dagger (it must have remained concealed about his person) with which he had put an end to Desdemona's life. He was disarmed by Montano when he offered to stab Iago (ll.238-9) and the 'sword of Spain' he found in the chamber was also taken away from him when he wounded Iago (l. 286), so that the impression was produced that he had no weapon with him (l. 358).

Lod. Oh, bloody period !
Gra. All that 's spoke is marr'd.
Oth. I kiss'd thee ere I kill'd thee : no way but this,
Killing myself, to die upon a kiss.
[*Falls on the bed, and dies.*
Cas. This did I fear, but thought he had no weapon ;
For he was great of heart.
Lod. [*To Iago*] O Spartan dog,
More fell than anguish, hunger, or the sea !
Look on the tragic loading of this bed ;
This is thy work : the object poisons sight ;
Let it be hid. — Gratiano, keep the house,
And seize upon the fortunes of the Moor,
For they succeed on you. — To you, lord governor,
Remains the censure of this hellish villain :
The time, the place, the torture, — oh, enforce it !
Myself will straight aboard, and to the state
This heavy act with heavy heart relate. [*Exeunt.*

355. *Oh, bloody period !* One after another, commentators explain 'period' here to mean 'conclusion, ending,' but to my mind the correct meaning is 'time' — oh, bloody time ! oh, bloody hour ! — referring to the series of 'bloody' events which took place in that short period.

All that's spoke is marr'd. Othello's explanation regarding his act has become utterly useless in consequence of his suicide.

357. *To die upon a kiss.* "At the word '*thus*' Othello stabs himself, cries 'O Desdemona !', makes an effort to reach the bed, clutching (not much) for the curtains as he falls back dead." (Booth). 'In the attempt to imprint a last kiss on the cold, rigid face of his wife, he fell backwards, — dead.' (Hawkins, *Life of Kean*).

359. *Spartan dog.* 'The dogs of Sparta were reckoned among those of the most fierce and savage kind.' (Hanmer) Singer thinks the reference is to the determined silence of Iago, which resembled the proverbial silence of the Spartans under suffering, as well as to the savageness of the dogs.

364. *Seize upon the fortunes.* Take possession of the property.

365. *Succeed on you* — descend to you as next of kin to Desdemona, Othello having no heirs.

366. *Censure.* 'Sentence', 'condemnation.' Cf. II. iii. 189 ; IV. i. 263.

367. *The torture* — the kind of torture.

369. *This heavy act.* 'The tragic loading,' the dreadful occurrences of the night. *Heavy heart* — sad heart. Cf. V. i. 42.

CINTHIO'S TALE OF THE MOOR

Translated by J. E. Taylor, 1855.

[See note on 'The Sources of the Plot,' p. 4.]

The Third Decade — Novel VII

There once lived in Venice a Moor, who was very valiant and of a handsome person; and having given proofs in war of great skill and prudence, he was highly esteemed by the Signoria of the Republic, who in rewarding deeds of valour advanced the interests of the State.

It happened that a virtuous lady of marvellous beauty, named Disdemona, fell in love with the Moor, moved thereto by his valour; and he, vanquished by the beauty and the noble character of Disdemona, returned her love; and their affection was so mutual that, although the parents of the lady strove all they could to induce her to take another husband, she consented to marry the Moor; and they lived in such harmony and peace in Venice that no word ever passed between them that was not affectionate and kind.

Now it happened at this time that the Signoria of Venice made a change in the troops whom they used to maintain in Cyprus, and they appointed the Moor commander of the soldiers whom they dispatched thither. Joyful as was the Moor at the honour proffered him, such dignity being only conferred on men of noble rank and well-tried faith, and who had displayed bravery in arms,—yet his pleasure was lessened when he reflected on the length and dangers of the voyage, fearing that Disdemona would be pained at his absence. But Disdemona, who had no other happiness in the world than the Moor, and who rejoiced to witness the testimony of his valour her husband had received from so powerful and noble a Republic, was all impatient that he should embark with his troops, and longed to accompany him to so honourable a post. And all the more it vexed her to see the Moor so troubled; and not knowing what could be the reason, one day, when they were at dinner, she said to him 'How is it, O Moor, that when so honourable a post has been conferred on you by the Signoria, you are thus melancholy?'

The Moor answered Disdemona, 'My pleasure at the honour I have received is disturbed by the love I bear you; for I see that of necessity one of two things must happen,—either that I take you with me to encounter the perils of the sea, or, to save you from this danger, I must leave you here in Venice. The first could not be otherwise than serious to me, for all the toil you would have to bear and every danger that might befall you would cause me extreme anxiety and pain, yet, were I to leave you behind me, I should be hateful to myself, since in parting from you I should part from my own life.'

Disdemona, on hearing this replied: 'My husband, what thoughts are these that wander through your mind? Why let such things disturb you? I will accompany you whithersoe'er you go, were it to pass through fire, as now to cross the water in a safe and well-provided ship;

if indeed there are toils and perils to encounter, I will share them with you. And in truth I should think you love me little were you to leave me here in Venice, denying me to bear you company, or could believe that I would liefer bide in safety here than share the dangers that await you. Prepare then for the voyage with all the readiness which the dignity of the post you hold deserves.'

The Moor, in the fulness of his joy, threw his arms around his wife's neck, and with an affectionate and tender kiss exclaimed, 'God keep you long in such love, dear wife!' Then speedily donning his armour, and having prepared everything for his expedition, he embarked on board the galley with his wife and all his troops, and, setting sail, they pursued their voyage, and with a perfectly tranquil sea arrived safely at Cyprus.

Now amongst the soldiery there was an Ensign, a man of handsome figure, but of the most depraved nature in the world. This man was in great favour with the Moor, who had not the slightest idea of his wickedness; for, despite the malice lurking in his heart, he cloaked with proud and valorous speech and with a specious presence the villainy of his soul with such art that he was to all outward show another Hector or Achilles. This man had likewise taken with him his wife to Cyprus, a young, and fair, and virtuous lady; and being of Italian birth she was much loved by Disdemona, who spent the greater part of every day with her.

In the same Company there was a certain Captain of a troop, to whom the Moor was much affectioned. And Disdemona, for this cause, knowing how much her husband valued him, showed him proofs of the greatest kindness, which was all very grateful to the Moor. Now the wicked Ensign, regardless of the faith that he had pledged his wife, no less than of the friendship, fidelity, and obligation which he owed the Moor, fell passionately in love with Disdemona, and bent all his thoughts to achieve his conquest; yet he dared not to declare his passion openly, fearing that, should the Moor perceive it, he would at once kill him. He therefore sought in various ways, and with secret guile, to betray his passion to the lady; but she, whose every wish was centred in the Moor, had no thought for this Ensign more than for any other man; and all the means he tried to gain her love had no more effect than if he had not tried them. But the Ensign imagined that the cause of his ill success was that Disdemona loved the Captain of the troop; and he pondered how to remove him from her sight. The love which he had borne the lady now changed into the bitterest hate, and, having failed in his purposes, he devoted all his thoughts to plot the death of the Captain of the troop and to divert the affection of the Moor from Disdemona. After revolving in his mind various schemes, all alike wicked, he at length resolved to accuse her of unfaithfulness to her husband, and to represent the Captain as her paramour. But knowing the singular love the Moor bore to Disdemona, and the friendship which he had for the Captain, he was well aware that, unless he practised an artful fraud upon the Moor, it were impossible to make him give ear to either accusation; wherefore he

resolved to wait until time and circumstance should open a path for him to engage in his foul project.

Not long afterwards it happened that the Captain, having drawn his sword upon a soldier of the guard, and struck him, the Moor deprived him of his rank; whereat Disdemona was deeply grieved, and endeavored again and again to reconcile her husband to the man. This the Moor told to the wicked Ensign, and how his wife importuned him so much about the Captain that he feared he should be forced at last to receive him back to service. Upon this hint the Ensign resolved to act, and began to work his web of intrigue. 'Perchance,' said he, 'the lady Disdemona may have good reason to look kindly on him.'

'And wherefore?' said the Moor.

'Nay, I would not step 'twixt man and wife,' replied the Ensign, 'but let your eyes be witness to themselves.'

In vain the Moor went on to question the officer,—he would proceed no further; nevertheless, his words left a sharp, stinging thorn in the Moor's heart, who could think of nothing else, trying to guess their meaning and lost in melancholy. And one day, when his wife had been endeavouring to pacify his anger toward the Captain, and praying him not to be unmindful of ancient services and friendship for one small fault, especially since peace had been made between the Captain and the soldier he had struck, the Moor was angered, and exclaimed, 'Great cause have you, Disdemona, to care so anxiously about this man! Is he a brother, or your kinsman, that he should be so near your heart?'

The lady, with all gentleness and humility, replied, 'Be not angered, my dear lord; I have no other cause to bid me speak than sorrow that I see you lose so dear a friend as, by your own words, this Captain has been to you; nor has he done so grave a fault that you should bear him so much enmity. Nay, but you Moors are of so hot a nature that every little trifle moves you to anger and revenge.'

Still more enraged at these words, the Moor replied, 'I could bring proofs—by heaven it mocks belief! but for the wrongs I have endured revenge must satisfy my wrath.'

Disdemona, in astonishment and fright, seeing her husband's anger kindled against her, so contrary to his wont, said humbly and with timidness, 'None save a good intent has led me thus to speak with you, my lord; but to give cause no longer for offence, I'll never speak a word more on the subject.'

The Moor, observing the earnestness with which his wife again pleaded for the Captain, began to guess the meaning of the Ensign's words; and in deep melancholy he went to seek that villain and induce him to speak more openly of what he knew. Then the Ensign, who was bent upon injuring the unhappy lady, after feigning at first great reluctance to say aught that might displease the Moor, at length pretended to yield to his entreaties, and said, 'I can't deny it pains me to the soul to be thus forced to say what needs must be more hard to hear than any other

grief; but since you will it so, and that the regard I owe your honour compels me to confess the truth, I will no longer refuse to satisfy your questions and my duty. Know, then, that for no other reason is your lady vexed to see the Captain in disfavour than the pleasure that she has in his company whenever he comes to your house, and all the more since she has taken an aversion to your blackness.'

These words went straight to the Moor's heart; but in order to hear more (now that he believed true all that the Ensign had told him) he replied, with a fierce glance, 'By heavens, I scarce can hold this hand from plucking out that tongue of thine, so bold, which dares to speak such slander of my wife!'

'Captain,' replied the Ensign, 'I looked for such reward for these my faithful offices, — none else; but since my duty, and the jealous care I bear your honour, have carried me thus far, I do repeat, so stands the truth, as you have heard it from these lips; and if the lady Disdemona hath, with a false show of love for you, blinded your eyes to what you should have seen, this is no argument but that I speak the truth. Nay, this same Captain told it me himself, like one whose happiness is incomplete until he can declare it to another; and, but that I feared your anger, I should have given him, when he told it me, his merited reward, and slain him. But since informing you of what concerns you more than any other man brings me so undeserved a recompense, would I had held my peace, since silence might have spared me your displeasure.'

Then the Moor, burning with indignation and anguish, said, 'Make thou these eyes self-witnesses of what thou tell'st or on thy life I'll make thee wish thou hadst been born without a tongue.'

'An easy task it would have been,' replied the villain, 'when he was used to visit at your house; but now that you have banished him, not for just cause, but for mere frivolous pretext, it will be hard to prove the truth. Still, I do not forego the hope to make you witness of that which you will not credit from my lips.'

Thus they parted. The wretched Moor, struck to the heart as by a barbed dart, returned to his home, and awaited the day when the Ensign should disclose to him the truth which was to make him miserable to the end of his days. But the evil-minded Ensign was, on his part, not less troubled by the chastity which he knew the lady Disdemona observed inviolate; and it seemed to him impossible to discover a means of making the Moor believe what he had falsely told him; and, turning the matter over in his thoughts in various ways, the villain resolved on a new deed of guilt.

Disdemona often used to go, as I have already said, to visit the Ensign's wife, and remained with her a good part of the day. Now, the Ensign observed that she carried about with her a handkerchief, which he knew the Moor had given her, finely embroidered in the Moorish fashion, and which was precious to Disdemona, nor less so to the Moor. Then he conceived the plan of taking this kerchief from her secretly, and thus

laying the snare for her final ruin. The Ensign had a little daughter, a child three years of age, who was much loved by Disdemona, and one day, when the unhappy lady had gone to pay a visit at the house of this vile man, he took the little child up in his arms and carried her to Disdemona, who took her and pressed her to her bosom; whilst at the same instant this traitor, who had extreme dexterity of hand, drew the kerchief from her sash so cunningly that she did not notice him, and overjoyed he took his leave of her.

Disdemona, ignorant of what had happened, returned home, and, busy with other thoughts, forgot the handkerchief. But a few days afterwards, looking for it and not finding it, she was in alarm, lest the Moor should ask her for it, as he oft was wont to do. Meanwhile, the wicked Ensign, seizing a fit opportunity, went to the Captain of the troop, and with crafty malice left the handkerchief at the head of his bed without his discovering the trick, until the following morning, when, on his getting out of bed, the handkerchief fell upon the floor, and he set his foot upon it. And not being able to imagine how it had come into his house, knowing that it belonged to Disdemona, he resolved to give it to her; and waiting until the Moor had gone from home, he went to the back door and knocked. It seemed as if fate conspired with the Ensign to work the death of the unhappy Disdemona. Just at that time the Moor returned home, and hearing a knocking at the back door, he went to the window, and in a rage exclaimed, 'Who knocks there?' The Captain, hearing the Moor's voice, and fearing lest he should come down stairs and attack him, took to flight without answering a word. The Moor went down, and opening the door hastened into the street and looked about, but in vain. Then, returning into the house in great anger, he demanded of his wife who it was that had knocked at the door. Disdemona replied, as was true, that she did not know; but the Moor said, 'It seemed to me the Captain.'

'I know not,' answered Disdemona, 'whether it was he or another person.'

The Moor restrained his fury, great as it was, wishing to do nothing before consulting the Ensign, to whom he hastened instantly, and told him all that had passed, praying him to gather from the Captain all he could respecting the affair. The Ensign, overjoyed at the occurrence, promissed the Moor to do as he requested, and one day he took occasion to speak with the Captain when the Moor was so placed that he could see and hear them as they conversed. And whilst talking to him of every other subject than of Disdemona, he kept laughing all the time aloud, and, feigning astonishment, he made various movements with his head and hands, as if listening to some tale of marvel. As soon as the Moor saw the Captain depart, he went up to the Ensign to hear what he had said to him. And the Ensign, after long entreaty, at length said, 'He has hidden from me nothing, and has told me that he has been used to visit your wife whenever you went from home, and that on the last

occasion she gave him this handkerchief which you presented to her when you married her.'

The Moor thanked the Ensign, and it seemed now clear to him that, should he find Disdemona not to have the handkerchief, it was all true that the Ensign had told to him. One day, therefore, after dinner, in conversation with his wife on various subjects, he asked her for the kerchief. The unhappy lady, who had been in great fear of this, grew red as fire at this demand; and to hide the scarlet of her cheeks, which was closely noted by the Moor, she ran to a chest and pretended to seek the handkerchief, and after hunting for it a long time, she said, 'I know not how it is—I cannot find it; can you, perchance, have taken it?'

If I had taken it,' said the Moor, 'why should I ask it of you? but, you will look better another time.

On leaving the room the Moor fell to meditating how he should put his wife to death, and likewise the Captain of the troop, so that their death should not be laid to his charge. And as he ruminated over this, day and night, he could not prevent his wife's observing that he was not the same towards her as he had been wont; and she said to him again and again, 'What is the matter? What troubles you? How comes it that you, who were the most light-hearted man in the world, are now so melancholy?'

The Moor feigned various reasons in reply to his wife's questioning, but she was not satisfied, and, although conscious that she had given the Moor no cause, by act or deed, to be so troubled, yet she feared that he might have grown wearied of her; and she would say to the Ensign's wife, 'I know not what to say of the Moor; he used to be all love towards me; but within these few days he has become another man; and much I fear that I shall prove a warning to young girls not to marry against the wishes of their parents, and that the Italian ladies my learn from me not to wed a man whom nature and habitude of life estrange from us. But as I know the Moor is on such terms of friendship with your husband, and communicates to him all his affairs, I pray you, if you have heard from him aught that you may tell me of, fail not to befriend me.' And as she said this, she wept bitterly.

The Ensign's wife, who knew the whole truth (her husband wishing to make use of her to compass the death of Disdemona), but could never consent to such a project, dared not, from fear of her husband, disclose a single circumstance: all she said was, 'Beware lest you give any cause of suspicion to your husband, and show to him by every means your fidelity and love.'—'Indeed I do so,' replied Disdemona, 'but it is all of no avail.'

Meanwhile the Moor sought in every way to convince himself of what he fain would have found untrue, and he prayed the Ensign to contrive that he might see the handkerchief in the possession of the Captain. This was a difficult matter to the wicked Ensign; nevertheless, he promised to use every means to satisfy the Moor of the truth of what he said.

Now, the Captain had a wife at home who worked the most marvellous

embroidery upon lawn, and seeing the handkerchief, which belonged to the Moor's wife, she resolved, before it was returned to her, to work one like it. As she was engaged in this task, the Ensign observed her standing at a window, where she could be seen by all the passers-by in the street, and he pointed her out to the Moor, who was now perfectly convinced of his wife's guilt. Then he arranged with the Ensign to slay Disdemona and the Captain of the troop, treating them as it seemed they both deserved. And the Moor prayed the Ensign that he would kill the Captain, promising eternal gratitude to him. But the Ensign at first refused to undertake so dangerous a task, the Captain being a man of equal skill and courage; until at length, after much entreating and being richly paid, the Moor prevailed on him to promise to attempt the deed.

Having formed this resolution, the Ensign, going out one dark night, sword in hand, met the Captain on his way to visit a courtesan, and struck him a blow on his right thigh, which cut off his leg and felled him to the earth. Then the Ensign was on the point of putting an end to his life, when the Captain, who was a courageous man and used to the sight of blood and death, drew his sword, and, wounded as he was, kept on his defence, exclaiming with a loud voice, 'I'm murdered!' Thereupon the Ensign, hearing the people come running up, with some of the soldiers who were lodged thereabouts, took to his heels to escape being caught; then turning about again, he joined the crowd, pretending to have been attracted by the noise. And when he saw the Captain's leg cut off, he judged that, if not already dead, the blow must, at all events, end his life; and whilst in his heart he was rejoiced at this, he yet feigned to compassionate the Captain as he had been his brother.

The next morning the tidings of this affair spread through the whole city, and reached the ears of Disdemona; whereat she, who was kind-hearted and little dreamed that any ill would betide her, evinced the greatest grief at the calamity. This served but to confirm the Moor's suspicions, and he went to seek for the Ensign, and said to him, 'Do you know that my wife is in such grief at the Captain's accident that she is well nigh gone mad.'

'And what could you expect, seeing he is her very soul?' replied the Ensign.

'Ay, soul forsooth!' exclaimed the Moor; 'I'll draw the soul from out her body; call me no man if that I fail to shut the world upon this wretch.'

Then they consulted of one means and another—poison and daggers—to kill poor Disdemona, but could resolve on nothing. At length the Ensign said, 'A plan comes to my mind, which will give you satisfaction and raise cause for no suspicion. It is this: the house in which you live is very old, and the ceiling of your chamber has many cracks; I propose we take a stocking, filled with sand, and beat Disdemona with it till she dies; thus will her body bear no signs of violence. When she is dead we can pull down a portion of the ceiling, and thus make it seem

as if a rafter falling on her head had killed the lady. Suspicion cannot rest on you, since all men will impute her death to accident.'

This cruel counsel pleased the Moor, and he only waited for a fitting time to execute the plot. One night, when he and Disdemona had retired to bed, the Ensign, whom the Moor had concealed in a closet which opened into the chamber, raised a noise in the closet, according to a concerted plan; whereat the Moor said to his wife, 'Did you not hear that noise?'

'Indeed I heard it,' she replied.

'Rise,' said the Moor, 'and see what 'tis.'

The unhappy Disdemona rose from bed, and the instant she approached the closet, out rushed the Ensign, and being strong and of stout nerve, he beat her cruelly with the bag of sand across her back; upon which Disdemona fell to the ground, scarce able to draw her breath; but with the little voice she had left, she called upon the Moor for aid. But the Moor, leaping from bed, exclaimed, 'Thou wickedest of women, thus has thy falseness found its just reward, the recompense to wives who, counterfeiting love, place horns upon their husbands' brows.'

The wretched lady, hearing these words, and feeling that she was near her end, (for the Ensign had given her another blow,) appealed to the justice of Heaven, since justice here had failed her, in proof of her fidelity and truth; and as she was thus calling Heaven to witness, the wicked Ensign inflicted a third blow, under which she sank lifeless on the floor.

Then the Ensign and the Moor, laying Disdemona on the bed and wounding her head, pulled down part of the ceiling of the chamber, as they had arranged; whereupon the Moor began to call aloud for help, exclaiming that the house was falling. Hearing this uproar, the neighbours all came running up, and there found Disdemona lying dead beneath a rafter,—a sight which from the good life of that poor lady, did fill all hearts with sorrow.

On the following day Disdemona was buried, followed to the grave by the universal grief of the people. But Heaven, the just regarder of all hearts, willed not that so wicked a deed should go unpunished. Ere long the Moor, whom Disdemona had loved more than her own life, began to feel such sorrow at her loss that he went wandering about as one bereft of reason, searching in every part of the house. And reflecting in his thoughts that the Ensign had been the cause that he had lost, with Disdemona, all joy in life, he conceived so deep a hatred to that wicked man he could not bear to set eyes on him, and had it not been for his fear of the inviolable justice of the Signoria of Venice, he would have slain him openly. But being unable to do this with safety, he deprived him of his rank, and would not allow him to remain in his Company; whereat such an enmity arose between the two that no greater or more deadly can be imagined.

The Ensign, that wickedest of all bad men, now turned his thoughts to injuring the Moor; and seeking out the Captain, whose wound was by

this time healed, and who went about with a wooden leg in place of the one that had been cut off, he said to him, ''Tis time you should be avenged for your lost limb; and if you will come with me to Venice, I'll tell you who the malefactor is, whom I dare not mention to you here for many reasons; and I will bring you proofs.'

The Captain of the troop, whose anger returned fiercely, but without knowing why, thanked the Ensign, and went with him to Venice. On arriving there the Ensign told him that it was the Moor who had cut off his leg, on account of the suspicion he had formed of Disdemona's conduct with him; and for that reason he had slain her, and then spread the report that the ceiling had fallen and killed her. Upon hearing which, the Captain accused the Moor to the Signoria, both of having cut off his leg and killed his wife, and called the Ensign to witness the truth of what he said. The Ensign declared both charges to be true, for that the Moor had disclosed to him the whole plot, and had tried to persuade him to perpetrate both crimes; and that having afterwards killed his wife out of jealousy he had conceived, he had narrated to him the manner in which he had perpetrated her death.

The Signoria of Venice, when they heard of the cruelty inflicted by a barbarain upon a lady of their city, commanded that the Moor's arms should be pinioned in Cyprus, and he be brought to Venice, where, with many tortures, they sought to draw from him the truth. But the Moor, bearing with unyielding courage all the torment, denied, the whole charge so resolutely that no confession could be drawn from him. But, although by his constancy and firmness he escaped death, he was, after being confined for several days in prison, condemned to perpetual banishment, in which he was eventually slain by the kinsfolk of Disdemona, as he merited. The Ensign returned to his own country, and, following up his wonted villainy, he accused one of his companions of having sought to persuade him to kill an enemy of his, who was a man of noble rank; whereupon this person was arrested and put to the torture; but when he denied the truth of what his accuser had declared, the Ensign himself was likewise tortured to make him prove the truth of his accusations; and he was tortured so that his body ruptured, upon which he was removed from prison and taken home, where he died a miserable death. Thus did Heaven avenge the innocence of Disdemona; and all these events were narrated by the Ensign's wife, who was privy to the whole, after his death, as I have told them here.

THE STORY OF SAMPIERO,

THE FAMOUS CORSICAN LEADER.

C. Elliot Browne (*The Athenæum*, 18 Sept., 1875) points out that the 'Sampiero tragedy' which made a great noise in Europe, at the time, must have suggested the murder-scene of the drama to the poet. "Sampiero, or, as the name is more correctly written, San Pietro di Bastelica,

was an Italian adventurer in the service of France, who had arrived at high distinction by conduct and valour; and he had married, against the wish of all her relatives, the beautiful Corsican heiress, Vanina d'Ornano. ... In 1563, Sampiero, leaving his wife in France, went to Constantinople to beg assistance for the Corsicans from the Turks. During this absence his Genoese enemies are said to have tampered with some servants of his wife's household, and caused a report to reach Constantinople that she was living on too intimate terms with his secretary, Antonio. Immediately returning to France, Sampiero came up with his wife at Aix; and after a scene which all accounts agree to have been characterized on his part by a strange mixture of passionate tenderness and brutal ferocity, and on hers by gentle, uncomplaining submission, he asked pardon upon his knees for the deed he was about to commit, and deliberately strangled her with her handkerchief. (It is proper to add, that there is in existence another version of the affair, in which the cause of Vanina's fate is attributed to her husband's indignation at some secret advances which she had made to the Genoese government for the purpose of obtaining his pardon, thus excluding altogether the motive of jealousy.) Although wanting in several important points of resemblance, this story comes much nearer to the murder-scene of the drama than that of the tale in the *Hecatommithi*."

"OTHELLO" UNVEILED

"OTHELLO" UNVEILED

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

The Tragedy of Othello has been before the world for full three centuries. Millions have read it, millions have seen it acted on the stage. Many have made a deep study of it, expounded its beauties and explained its perplexities; many have analysed the characters that figure in it and interpreted the moral lessons it conveys to humanity. Indeed, the 'ethics and æsthetics' of the tragedy have been so elaborated from every point that it is hard to believe there is aught left for discovery, anything to be unveiled. And, to be sure, no one has so much as suspected in it the existence of any mystery, such as confronts the student of *Hamlet* at the very outset of his study.

The story is very simple. You read though the play, you see a secret marriage and its sequel. The characters are few. Othello, Desdemona and Iago — these three absorb your interest; Roderigo, Emilia, Cassio and Bianca, these play but a subordinate part, while you scarcely note the other persons — Brabantio and the Duke, Gratiano and Lodovico, and the rest. The action proceeds apace, the passion swells out and leads to the catastrophe in a distressingly short time. The finale is tragic in the extreme and oppressive without relief. It is a most terrible warning against secret marriages; a horrible deed of brutal ferocity, the outcome of half-a-day's jealousy; the explosion of a noble

character and the extinction of human forms divine, whose "tragic loading of the bed" poisons sight and sends the beholder into a swoon.

Such is the impression produced on the mind of the most cursory reader of this great tragedy, and he will smile if he is told that he has not fully comprehended it, that there is much behind the scenes and between them, which it is essential to know for a correct understanding and appreciation of the characters. To scholars who have devoted time and thought to the study of this and other works of the great poet, it will be nothing short of a surprise to learn that there is aught in *Othello,* which is still under a veil. "What is it?" will be their impatient interrogation.

Othello, like *Hamlet,* is exclusively a study of the human mind. In both, the theme of the poet is not the visible magnificence of the physical world but the impenetrable mystery of the human soul; not the glorious shapes of external nature but the beautiful involutions in the world of motives, passions and emotions; not the ocean and the rivulet, not the mountains and the clouds, nor battles and banquets, but the sublime and simple phases of human character, its noble heights and shady spots, its concords and conflicts and reconcilements. In both *Hamlet* and *Othello,* we have presented to us a few scenes from the life of certain characters whose lot is thrown together, and the problem in each is to discover the true bearing of the incidents upon each other, to interpret the motives and to understand the details of the complex mental mechanism which inevitably works the final result. The solution of this problem has been rendered extremely difficult in both tragedies by the large mass of information which the poet has cunningly withheld from our vision, letting out but a ray here and a streak there, otherwise leaving it

entirely to perception and imagination. The result is that, despite the efforts of the world's best intellects, three hundred years have rolled away, and *Hamlet* today remains as great a mystery as it ever was and *Othello* is but imperfectly understood, while the notion is universal that in the one there is scarcely anything hidden which it is important to know and in the other there is but a partial mystery.

One point however in *Othello* has all along perplexed the understanding of critics and commentators. The time taken up by the action of the drama has presented insuperable obstacles. Act I opens at Venice at midnight and records the events of two or three hours. There is then an interval of some days for the voyage to Cyprus, and Act II opens in that island on the afternoon of landing. The rejoicings at the port and the dismissal of Cassio take us through the night, and Act III opens on the very next morning, Cassio seeking an interview with Desdemona at the close of Scene i and Othello despatching letters to the Senate in Scene ii. Then the whole chain of events from Scene iii of that Act to Act IV. i., namely—Cassio's pleading with Desdemona, the latter's intercession on his behalf, the evil suggestions of Iago, their work on Othello's mind, the loss of the handkerchief and the false evidence whereby Iago induces the Moor to believe in his wife's unchastity—takes place in the space of a few hours between morning and evening, when Lodovico arrives from Venice with letters from the Duke, recalling Othello and deputing Cassio in his place. A little later we have the interviews of Othello with Emilia and Desdemona, supper is over, Othello goes out for a stroll and Desdemona retires to bed at the bidding of her lord. This brings us to the end of Act IV and the time is near midnight. Act V takes us to the catastrophe

which follows and the next day dawns but to witness the funeral of the ill-fated pair. The impression is thus produced that the whole action in Cyprus takes place in less than a day and a half, but the question arises—how can we account for Lodovico's arrival from Venice and the recall of Othello by the Senate even before it could be known that he had landed in Cyprus? There are, besides, several distinct indications in the drama of the lapse of a long period in Cyprus between the landing of Othello and the murder of Desdemona, which is irreconcilable with the occurrence of the catastrophe on the very next day after landing,—amongst others, the passage in which Bianca finds fault with Cassio on the score of his absence: *

> "What, keep a week away? seven days and nights?
> Eight score eight hours? and lovers' absent hours,
> More tedious than the dial eight score times?
> Oh, weary reckoning!"

These apparent contradictions have puzzled critics and led then into all manner of conjectures. Some have held with Professor Hall Griffin that Shakespeare is at fault; "he did not trouble himself to reconcile . . . . inconsistencies which practical experience as an actor would tell him do not trouble the spectator." Others have supposed that *Othello* has not reached us in its perfect form, that for stage purposes, some scenes were possibly "struck out and others so run together as to confuse the time-plot originally laid down by the

* For other indications of 'long time,' see Notes on III. iii. 292: 'My wayward husband hath a hundred times Woo'd me to steal it;' *id.* 340: 'I slept the next night well;' III iv. 149: 'Nor of them look for such observancy As fits the bridal;' IV. ii. 2: 'Nor ever heard, nor ever did suspect;' *id.* 23: 'And yet she'll kneel and pray; I have seen her do't;' *id.* 106: 'Prithee, to-night Lay on my bed my wedding sheets;' *id.* 175: 'Every day thou dafts me with some device;' V. ii. 211: 'That she with Cassio hath the act of shame A thousand times committed;' and last, not least, V. ii. 241: 'I'll after that same villain'—a conclusive proof of *long time* which does not seem to have struck any critic or commentator.

author"; that "the links in the chain of time, the absence of which so startle the reader, would not be, and indeed are not, missed in the visible action on the stage; but we should not, therefore, rashly jump to the conclusion that they never existed, and therefore that the author deliberately designed an impossible plot."* But the most remarkable and certainly the most original of solutions has come to us from the brain of Professor Wilson (Christopher North) in the shape of that unique 'Theory of Double Time' which gets over the time-discrepancies in *Othello* and other plays of Shakespeare by considering them excellences and evidences of a rare and unrivalled art!

It will be out of place here to discuss the merits of a theory which has successfully deluded the propounder and many great scholars besides. It will be shown in the last part of this work entitled "The Double Time Delusion" that this theory is an absurd and meaningless fantasy which can have existence only in a dream, that it has no application in any play of Shakespeare's, and that the time-puzzles we meet with in some of these are only apparent, and result from the imperfect appreciation of the hidden art of a mighty genius. Suffice it to say here that, in *Othello,* as we shall see in the course of this Exposition, there is absolutely no room for any delusion of double time, and no such contradictions really exist as have driven critics into the wilderness of surmise and conjecture.

The truth is that the difficulty created by the duration of the action in *Othello* has its origin not in any discrepancies of time which exist in the drama, but in the purblind perception of critics which led them into gratuitous assumptions. Most scholars have stumbled into the wrong assumption that the recall of Othello by

* This is Daniel's view.—*New Shak. Soc. Trans.* 1877-79, Part ii. 231.

the Senate was due to communications which reached them from Cyprus. Some have likewise assumed that long time in Cyprus, after the seed of suspicion is sown in Othello's mind, is necessary for the 'probability of the plot'—that the action of the drama, which is represented as taking place with overwhelming rapidity, must in reality require a considerable stretch of time; that Othello's love can only change by slow degrees and that his jealousy cannot pass through gestation and germination and grow up in a few hours into that mighty whirlwind of passion which sweeps on without stop or stay to the catastrophe.

It is certain that these erroneous assumptions would have been saved if critics had attempted to understand the facts and events disclosed in the drama in the light of those withheld from vision, and had endeavoured to raise the veil which the artist's hand has cunningly cast over the situation at the commencement, over the interval, and in some measure over the chain of events which took place after it. When this veil is well removed, no discrepancy of time remains, no unnatural or improbable development of passions manifests itself, no groping in the dark hampers the understanding, and no room is left for the difficulties and misapprehensions which have created long pages of comment upon the import of a single line, and sometimes of a single word. Let us proceed to lift up the veil with the help and guidance of SHAKESPEARE.

CHAPTER II

BEFORE THE MARRIAGE

I

THE drama opens at midnight with the secret marriage of Othello the Moor, and Desdemona the daughter of Brabantio, a Venetian nobleman and senator. Of the antecedents of this secret marriage, and of Othello and Desdemona and the other *dramatis personæ,* we have very little of direct information, but the poet has thrown enough hints throughout the piece to make the discovery of the hidden facts possible to intelligent and thoughtful scrutiny.

A dramatist, of course, is in full knowledge of the whole course of events into which he gives us a peep here and a peep there. His art consists in producing on the mind a vivid impression of the whole by the parts which he presents to vision, and when these are selected pretty evenly from a period, that art becomes simple and renders the drama as easy to understand as a tale, though, if the period be long, the drama may suffer in interest and scarcely deserve the name. It is a peculiarity of Shakespeare's wonderful art that, in most of his dramas, he confines the principal action to a single day, or to two or three consecutive days, connecting it, by an interval more or less long, with scenes of a prior day or days, and extending our knowledge still further back in time by hints and statements, direct and indirect. He thus produces a picture which, from its impressiveness and verisimilitude, readily fascinates the spectator and passer-by, while, to the patient and

thoughtful observer, it discloses a subtle background which reveals the real beauty and character of its proportions. In *Hamlet* and *Othello,* the poet has exhibited this art with consummate skill. In the former, the touches in and around the picture and in the background are thrown in such fine tints that it has become an interesting enigma, presenting a kaleidoscopic appearance; in the latter, those touches are so delicate that they have escaped observation and prevented the correct and complete comprehension of the masterpiece.

To the superficial reader of *Othello,* the secret marriage of the Moor with the beauty of Venice has indeed a very short history. It is summed up in two lines which fall from the mouth of Othello:

> "She lov'd me for the dangers I had pass'd,
> And I lov'd her that she did pity them."

The strength of Desdemona's love for Othello appears from the unequivocal manner in which she admits it to her father in the presence of the Duke and the senators:

> "My noble father,
> I do perceive here a divided duty:
> To you I am bound for life and education;
> My life and education both do learn me
> How to respect you; you are the lord of duty;
> I am hitherto your daughter; but here's my husband,
> And so much duty as my mother show'd
> To you, preferring you before her father,
> So much I challenge that I may profess
> Due to the Moor my lord."

And her determinate choice to live with the Moor is made clear in the speech in which she prays the Duke to allow her to accompany her lord to the wars:

> "That I love the Moor to live with him,
> My downright violence and storm of fortunes
> May trumpet to the world: my heart's subdued
> Even to the very quality of my lord:
> I saw Othello's visage in his mind,

> And to his honours and his valiant parts
> Did I my soul and fortunes consecrate.
> So that, dear lords, if I be left behind,
> A moth of peace, and he go to the war,
> The rites for why I love him are bereft me,
> And I a heavy interim shall support
> By his dear absence. Let me go with him."

Now, both cursory and critical readers of *Othello* have fallen into the initial blunder of believing that the above passages contain a true representation of fact and feeling — a blunder which has misled them in the appreciation of the characters and the import of the tragedy.

Othello indeed says before the Duke that he "will a round unvarnished tale deliver of his whole course of love;" but has he done so? He tells us that when he related the story of his adventures to Desdemona, in "a pliant hour," she gave him for his pains "a world of sighs" and swore it was strange — passing strange — and pitiful. And says the Moor —

> "She wish'd she had not heard it, yet she wish'd
> That heaven had made her such a man; she thank'd me,
> And bade me, if I had a friend that lov'd her,
> I should but teach him how to tell my story,
> And that would woo her. Upon this hint I spake."

But he has not told us what he spoke, how he pursued the hint and whether he had any trouble in inducing Desdemona to accept his love. Are we to suppose that Desdemona's hint was in substance a clean proffer of love to the Moor, that the latter gladly accepted it, and marriage followed soon after. If so, where was the necessity for Cassio going between them "very oft" as Othello afterwards tells us, and for the "many a time," Desdemona alludes to, when she spoke of Othello "dispraisingly" and Cassio took his part? What did Cassio say to her on these many occasions, and had he indeed by hard and persistent advocacy to induce her to accept the hand of the Moor?

Then again, are we to suppose that the strange tone which Desdemona assumes towards her old father before the Duke and which completely bewilders and humbles him into silence, is the outcome of her natural disposition, or are we to attribute it to the perplexing situation into which she is brought all of a sudden? And shall we accept that Desdemona loved the Moor and married him in the full belief that she was thereby committing a "downright violence and storm of fortunes," that she left her home on that ominous night with the notion that she was quitting it for ever and was soon to accompany her lord to the wars which were impending? Was this the understanding with which Othello and Desdemona agreed to unite their hands in marriage? Then, why does Othello feel puzzled when he is ordered by the Duke to start off that very night, and why does he, instead of soliciting permission for taking Desdemona with him, propose to leave her behind and only crave "fit disposition" for her—

> "Due reference of place and exhibition,
> With such accommodation and besort
> As levels with her breeding"?

Had he never thought of taking her with him to the wars, which of course he knew were impending, and had he no means himself to make arrangements for her suitable accommodation? Indeed, what arrangements had he made for their living together until he should be ordered off to start, for surely he was not aware that the emergency would arise that very night? Where would they have slept that night and spent the subsequent days if the emergency had arisen later? At the Sagittary? at Othello's lodging? or was it a scheme of elopement and did they mean to run away? It is evident that Othello had never dreamt of taking Desdemona to the wars, and Desdemona's prayer to be

allowed to accompany her husband was the sudden inspiration of the moment, the result of a critical situation which left her no choice. Then why did these unhappy lovers rush into marriage — a secret marriage — at a most inopportune time when they knew they should soon be separated? Did they intend to get back to their homes immediately after their hands were united in matrimony, and did they hope to reveal the event the next morning to the old father, implore his forgiveness and obtain his approval and blessing, or did they mean to keep it a secret till Othello returned from the wars?

Again, if Cassio befriended Othello during the whole course of his wooing and was in it "from first to last" and went "very oft" between Othello and Desdemona, how comes it that, at the time of the marriage, Iago is the trusted confidant of Othello and evidently makes all the necessary arrangements, while Cassio is apparently out of the secret and pretends to find the general at the Sagittary by sheer chance, and even Othello keeps up the pretence by telling his lieutenant it was well he found him there. The conversation which follows between Cassio and Iago inclines us even to suspect that possibly Othello had not taken Cassio into his confidence about the secret wedding and managed it all through Iago's help.

> *Cas.* Ancient, what makes he here?
> *Iago* 'Faith, he to-night hath boarded a land carack:
> If it prove lawful prize, he's made for ever.
> *Cas.* I do not understand.
> *Iago.* He's married.
> *Cas.* To who?

We may also enquire, who conducted Desdemona from her house to the Sagittary, at that "odd-even and dull watch of the night"—a man, or a woman? Are

we to believe Roderigo, who evidently got his information from Iago, when he says that Desdemona was

> "Transported, with no worse nor better guard
> But with a knave of common hire, a gondolier"?

And who was with Desdemona, or was she alone, at the Sagittary after Othello left the place to appear before the Duke? Or could it be Emilia who accompanied Desdemona from her house to the Sagittary and stayed with her afterwards?

It is permissible to ask, when and how did Othello's acquaintance with Emilia begin, for evidently he was not only acquainted with her but sure of commanding her services when he tells "honest" Iago to let his wife attend on Desdemona during the voyage? And what were the circumstances which gave occasion to its being "thought abroad" that Othello had a suspicious intimacy with the wife of his ancient and how did the scandal reach the ears of the husband?

We may ask, too, when did Iago get Roderigo under his thumb — was it before or after getting himself into the confidence of Othello? And what were the circumstances which placed Iago apparently in a position to offer help to Roderigo in his suit and which induced the latter to accept it at any cost? For it must be noted that clever and capable as Iago was to accomplish anything whatsoever he had not advertised his powers to the public, and even a fool like Roderigo would not place his purse at the disposal of one who had not some sort of ostensible means for fulfilling the hopes he held forth.

Over these and other matters which throw light on the history of the secret marriage and the situation at the time when it took place, the poet has cast a delicate veil, which, however, does not refuse to yield to the grasp of perception and imagination. Let us permit

ourselves to remove it and note what we observe. First, let us form the image of the Moor, the hero of this magnificent tragedy.

II

OTHELLO presents himself to us as a foreigner in the state of Venice,—a foreigner, however, who is a Christian and had, we may take it, been born and brought up in that religion. By race, he is an African Moor — a "Barbary horse" in the words of Iago, — a native of Mauritania, a descendant of "that adventurous race of men, who, striking out from the heart of Arabia ... swept in victory along the whole north-eastern coast of Africa." But he is no black negro though his tawny skin would at once distinguish him from the European; nor is he ugly in form and feature, though his detractors might exaggerate his racial peculiarities and speak of him as the "black ram" or "the thick lips." By no means in the prime of youth and slightly advanced "in the vale of years," he neverthless bears a stately figure which bespeaks his birth "from men of royal siege" and would soften any feeling of estrangement which his colour might create in a society of white people. A warrior with a proud military carriage, Othello comes before us, when the drama opens, at the zenith of his fame and renown. Christianity had kept him from service in heathendom, and Venice has benefitted by his prowess and loyalty. He had fought her wars by land and sea, won her victories and established order and security in her dominions. Feeling like a born patriot, he had ever held the honour of the state as his own, and vindicated it even in small matters. At Aleppo, for instance, where (says Steevens) it was immediate death for a Christian to strike a Turk, he

had not hesitated to despatch the turb in'd dog that had "beat a Venetian and traduced the state." He has become "all in all" to the Senate, and public opinion, "the soverign mistress of effects," has marked him as a general of unique fathom, indispensable to the safety of the state. He is now in the capital, living a life of peace and quiet, at the head of a standing force, ready against any emergency that may arise.

Nine months have elapsed since his return. The Duke and Senate had greeted him right royally and acknowledged his invaluable services to the state. The people, who had already heard of his daring exploits and unique achievements, had given him a most hearty welcome. The poor had looked upon him with wonder and admiration; the rich had cast off their exclusiveness and invited him, once and again, to their homes. They had listened with delight and attention to the account he gave them of his valorous feats and dangerous adventures. He had gained admission into the highest ranks of Venetian society, mixed with the proudest of magnificoes, shaken hands with the fairest of damsels and is now quite a familiar figure in the city.

There is nothing in the birth and upbringing of Othello which should disqualify him for this free intercourse in Venetian life. He is no barbarian — not, as Schlegel makes out, a half-civilized African with the mere appearance of culture put on "by the desire of fame, by foreign laws of honour and by gentler manners" —but a Moor of royal descent whose blood is imbued with the softening influence of Christianity and whose mind has received the refinement of feeling and character, and the principles of that great religion. His is not a nature that can dissemble culture and civilisation, however much these might cover any inflammable sparks lurking in the inmost depths of his inheritance.

A gentleman of noble birth, with a heart full of true tenderness, kindness and generosity, he was yet a most uncompromising soldier, and his heroic disposition led him into adventures and enterprises and found delight in daring deeds. Dangers and disasters did not daunt him,—he met them with cheerfulness and courage and with that immovable calmness which never forsook him in the battle-field even when the enemy's cannon blew off his army and his own brother from his side. His strange adventures and the wonders he had seen had stretched his fancy into the region of the fabulous and he could profess to have seen

> "The Anthropophagi, and men whose heads
> Do grow beneath their shoulders."

He could likewise believe in the magic of his handkerchief and speak credulously of the omen of a "raven o'er the infected house," and the "error of the moon" coming nearer the earth than she was wont, which "makes men mad." Brought up from his seventh year in "the tented field," knowing little of the craft of this world and having no experience but of "feats of broil and battle," he has developed "a free and open nature that thinks men honest that but seem to be so"—a trustful candour and an unsuspecting credulity and simplicity which cannot avail him in the cunning complications of civilised society. But the natural nobility of his character has imbibed the chivalry of war which would enhance the beauty of his conduct and deportment. His military life has invested him, too, with calmness and self-command, with firmness and strength of will and purpose, which add repose and dignity to his high character. Not he the man that could easily be carried away by passion or would leave a thing, once resolved upon, undone or half-done. It may be said of him that he moves altogether if he moves at all. And

he possesses a keen sense of the honour he has won and a proud consciousness of his own worth and capacity no less than of his rank and royal descent. He lacks, it is true, the polish of the arts and of letters, but he excels in the greatness of soul which clothes his intellect with imagination and his "rude" speech with a winning grace not always met with in the "soft phrase" of the trained orator. Little wonder that he is lionised by the people with whom he has identified himself and that they have admitted him into the closest social communion which any domiciled stranger, co-religionist and patriot can even hope to command.

Despite all this, it must be noted, Othello is looked upon as an alien in the land of his adoption. Much as his religion and manners and civilisation agree with those of the Venetians, the difference of his race and his colour stamp him out as a foreigner, and the very people who appreciate his loyalty and applaud his services to the state regard him as no better than "an extravagant and wheeling stranger of here and everywhere." They might annihilate all distance in their social relations with the warrior but they could not forget the difference of his race and nationality. They would talk with him, walk with him, eat with him, drink with him and pray with him, but could never look upon him as one of themselves—that is the great gulf which separates the guest from the host and of which both are equally conscious. Othello had indeed met with the warmest reception from the people of Venice. They had honoured him as their hero. He had been the favoured guest at the house of many a nobleman, and matrons and maidens had devoured the reminiscences he related of his adventures and exploits. But there was ever an air of superiority and condescension about them which retarded and repelled any thought

of a lasting alliance which should recognise and establish their equality. Had the Moor been black as coal or even dark-complexioned, they would probably have considered it contamination to shake hands with him or sit at table with him. But in his tawny colour there was nothing repulsive and they moved freely with him and respected him, though every moment they felt the difference of his race and reckoned its inferiority. Othello was quite aware of this prejudice which lurked in the minds of the Venetians—especially the aristocracy—and which not all his eminent services could eradicate. He was aware, too, that if ever their admiration turned into abuse, they would not hesitate to call him a 'black man'—(Lord Salisbury did not hesitate to apply this contemptuous epithet to the Grand Old Man of India)—or to damn him as a "lascivious Moor." In fact, we find Othello alluding to his own "black" colour, both as a reflection of the Venetian opinion and of his own conscious inferiority in the fairness of his complexion. This depreciation and prejudice oppressed him bitterly but he concealed his feeling with reserve and met it with the silent contempt which lay in his proud nature. He never forgot his own high rank and descent and the honour he had attained, and preserved a most dignified equilibrium of contentment. And he was mightily satisfied with the "unhoused free condition" of life to which he had got accustomed, having spent his best years in military service. Not that he was advanced "in the vale of years"—for that was not "much";—not that he was wanting in the strong spark of love, which, if aught remained in him of the Eastern temperament, should be living in his constitution, subdued as it was by severe self-control; not that he looked upon the civilised woman with suspicion, for his were the high and noble notions

of European chivalry; but that he knew very well that if he aspired for the hand of any Venetian beauty of rank, he should at any time meet with a rebuff both from the damsel and her relatives. He might easily enough have secured a plebian bride, if he wished, but his position and dignity would allow no degradation, and he preferred to live on in the proud and scornful consciousness of his own high worth and position, which had attracted the gaze of the *elite* of Venetian society and wrung admiration from them despite their conservatism. What was the tide of fortune which awaited this noble Moor?

III

Let us now turn our eyes to the damsel who was destined to give her hand to Othello and become the innocent victim of a merciless fate. DESDEMONA is indeed a beauty

"That paragons description and wild fame;
One that excels the quirks of blazoning pens,
And in the essential vesture of creation
Does tire the ingener."

The graces of her person are however completely overshadowed by the excellence of her character. Shakespeare refers to her external charms only by a few incidental hints which he throws out here and there, and it is the loveliness of her soul which predominates throughout the piece. We can form some idea of her fascinating beauty when Cassio gives expression to his happy conceit—

"Tempests themselves, high seas and howling winds,
The gutter'd rocks and congregated sands,—
Traitors ensteep'd to enclog the guiltless keel,—
As having sense of beauty, do omit
Their mortal natures, letting go safely by
The divine Desdemona."

Even Iago can be affected by her beauty, though he would attach to it a base significance, when he says—

> "What an eye she has! methinks it sounds a parley of provocation."

In the worst agony of doubt and grief, Othello no sooner sees Desdemona's form than he at once exclaims—

> "If she be false, heaven mock'd itself!—
> I'll not believe it."

And when, hopelessly deluded by direct evidence and convinced of her guilt, he resolves to put an end to her, he very touchingly thinks of the peerless beauty he must lose for ever:

> "A fine woman! a fair woman! a sweet woman! . . . . Oh, the world hath not a sweeter creature; she might lie by an emperor's side and command him tasks."

Even when he approaches the sleeping angel, with all the sternness of an executioner, intent on murder, he cannot easily lift his hand to put out the light of that "cunning'st pattern of excelling nature"—to pluck from the tree the rose whose sweet perfume does "almost persuade Justice to break her sword."

Even such a divine beauty as this dawned upon the vision of Othello when he set his foot in Brabantio's palatial home, invited thither as an honoured guest. Other homes in wealthy Venice, he had been invited to; other beauties he had seen and feasted his eyes upon. Everywhere he had been lionised and he had entertained his host with the story of his adventures and exploits; but nowhere had any fair form disturbed the equilibrium of his mind, or tempted him to forget the distance which race had created between him and the people of the land—a distance of which he was ever painfully conscious. He had seen many a lovely damsel and exchanged smiles and courtesies with her

—but only courtesies and no more. Beyond that and in respect of all matrimonial ideas, her mind was walled against him by prejudice as indeed his own against her by pride. But how if a maiden of irresistible charms should attract him and conquer him, and kindle the smouldering spark of love lurking in his heart? This was precisely the situation which overtook him at Brabantio's.

It is a serious mistake to suppose that in the mutual love of Othello and Desdemona which culminated in their secret marriage, Desdemona was the first to be attracted, that she made any advances to the Moor or was even "half the wooer." No, no! Hers is quite a different temperament and character. Born in a palace and brought up in luxury and leisure, she has acquired that perfection of accomplishment and refinement which swells and strengthens the magnetism of an earthly angel, but she has none of the vices and weaknesses of the aristocracy, nothing whatever of their forwardness or coquetishness. By nature, she is essentially reserved and modest—

> "A maiden never bold,
> Of spirit so still and quiet, that her motion
> Blush'd at herself."

She had lost her mother early in life, yet not so early as not to have been impressed by her high virtues and character, which she, as a true and loving daughter, must cultivate in herself. She knew how deeply her dear mother had loved her father, how devotedly he had been attached to her and how both of them had realised their united souls reflected in their darling child. She knew, too, how much her father's happiness had depended on her mother and what an irreparable blow the death of that loving wife was to the old man. Compared with his loss, hers was but a trifle. A model

mother and woman was indeed lost to her, but she could hardly feel herself an orphan with a father who lived for her and regarded her as his very soul. Should she not soothe his heart and supply the place of her mother in the home? And should she not ever keep before her mind the picture of that gentle lady who had been the embodiment of love and duty, of virtue and goodness, to whom her resemblance was so perfect that every one saw the mother in the child? Should she not make every one feel that the mother was actually living and growing in her? This was the ideal in the girl's mind which her mother's death called into prominence and which she never lost sight of in her life. She had already learnt to assist her mother in the household duties, already she had given work to her delicate hands in the service of her dear father, already given promise to the fond parents of the model daughter of whom they might well feel proud. No selfish thought had entered her soul, no conjugal love had found its way to her heart. She had known "Barbarie", her mother's maid, known too that

> "She was in love, and he she loved proved mad
> And did forsake her"

and she had learnt the "willow" song which expressed the poor maid's fortune and which she had died singing. But that love bore no meaning to her yet and perhaps frightened her in a measure; and when her mother passed away, the growing child could only think of the double duty of ministering to the comfort of her lonely father and continuing the good name of her mother. She was still young but she had the help of a devoted maid (who we shall see was no other than Emilia), the successor of "Barbarie," and she applied herself to household matters and social functions and managed them with an ability and skill which made her

an object-lesson to other girls. The sad lot which befell old Brabantio is by no means an uncommon occurrence in this world of good and evil, but few, it is certain, are blessed with the priceless fortune he possessed in a daughter so loving, so virtuous, so inspiring the parents' pride, as the simple, gentle Desdemona.

After her mother's death, Desdemona became the special favourite of every family in Venice. She was beloved both of the rich and the poor, and everybody praised her good qualities and pitied her motherless condition. As she grew up, the question of her marriage was on every one's lips. Who was going to secure her hand? Would she quit her father's home and deprive the old widower of the only comfort which sustained him in his lonely life? It was a problem which puzzled Brabantio more than any one else, and she was his only child and sole heiress to his large wealth and estate.

Brabantio, let us note, was no selfish father. The richest nobleman in Venice, and a most worthy senator, respected by everybody and scarcely less influential than the Duke, he was not wanting in patrician pride, nor could he for a moment forget his honour and rank. His counsel had ever been of high value to the Signiory, and both in his home and outside, he had been accustomed to dictate and to be obeyed. Rash on occasions, and provoked by contradiction and disobedience, he was nevertheless good and kind at heart and extremely benevolent, and was beloved not only by his kith and kin but by the whole mass of the people. His late wife who had been the personification of love and purity, of gentleness and obedience, calmed and subdued his disposition to no small extent, and in his widowed solitude, the happiness of his child was the watchword to guide and control and sustain him; for

he had learnt to love her most tenderly, with all the love of a father and mother, and had no other longing in life than to see her happily settled in matrimony.

Had Desdemona lost her mother a few years earlier, she might have developed into a self-willed, selfish girl, as children often do who have the misfortune to grow up without a mother's tender care and correction, without brother or sister, and without even the direction of an elderly lady in the household. But such was not her destiny. Before the mother departed this life, the little daughter had got into her good ways, and the love for her poor father which filled every corner of her heart and his for her now established themselves as growing forces which should keep her to that path in spite of any defects and drawbacks in the family. Her mother's death has indeed contributed to make her, not selfish and self-willed, but unselfish and self-dependent. She learnt very soon to knit herself, heart and soul, to her father. He was her ideal, his comfort was her care, his word was law to her, and obedience was her motto. Not that the father unreasonably and heartlessly forced her obedience in anything, but she delighted in yielding it even as her mother had done. She was never a girl who would break the father's heart to follow her own, though afterwards a pure irony of fate placed her conduct in a false light and presented her as a most heartless and undutiful daughter. Meek, submissive and gentle in the extreme, she has ever been "a child to chiding," timid and easily frightened; but this timidity has not deprived her of resolution and self-reliance, which her peculiar position in the house would often demand of her. Mixing and moving but occasionally in social circles, hers has been practically a life of retirement and simplicity, which has kept her ignorant of the world's ways; but happily this has protected her

mind against the prejudices of rank and induced the purest growth of her heart. A delicate girl, the very acme of beauty, grace, and gentleness of manner, Desdemona is at once a sweet angel, full of tenderness and and affection,—a pure, innocent soul, incapable of insincerity and impervious to all improper and indelicate thought. But she is no model of wit and wisdom. Her intellectual equipment is in truth of no very high order. She is more a busy housewife, "delicate with her needle," "an admirable musician who could sing the savageness out of a bear" than an expert in witty speech, or a versatile intellect well-informed and endowed with the knowledge and grasp of human nature and character. Her education and study in her quiet home have only helped to quicken her imagination and developed in her a turn for the marvellous, but they have not invested her with any practical wisdom so necessary in life. A plain simplicity, and a pure, unsuspecting credulity are her prominent characteristics as they are of the Moor. She strikes us as the original of the "deserving woman" whom Iago sketches afterwards:

> "She that was ever fair and never proud,
> Had tongue at will and yet was never loud;
> Never lack'd gold and yet went never gay,
> Fled from her wish and yet said 'Now I may;'
> She that being anger'd, her revenge being nigh,
> Bade her wrong stay and her displeasure fly;
> She that in wisdom never was so frail
> To change the cod's head for the salmon's tail;
> She that could think and ne'er disclose her mind,
> See suitors following and not look behind."

Desdemona's wisdom may not be quite so poor as the irony imports, but otherwise the picture is a true description of her perfections, though, of course, Iago does not omit to spoil it by adding "a most lame and impotent conclusion" that such a woman, if ever one existed,

would only be fit

> "To suckle fools and chronicle small beer."

To see this deserving woman in the protection of a deserving man was the one anxiety which occupied the mind of old Brabantio ever since Desdemona entered her eighteenth year. Italian girls—especially those in rich families—married and even became mothers much earlier than at that age, but Brabantio had postponed his daughter's marriage, for he could not easily face the trial, which awaited him, of separation from one who, to him, was all-in-all in life. He hoped, besides, that a few years' addition to her age would dispel the childish visions to which she showed a tendency and bring her to accept the match which was most agreeable to him and most suited to the special circumstances of the family. This match, Brabantio and his brother Gratiano and other kinsmen had all along thought of as the best for their darling girl, but it was not proposed to her until she was fairly ripe for appreciating its evident desirability, and, when it was, to the great disappointment of the father, she did not receive it with favour and encouragement. Her cousin Lodovico was indeed "a proper man," "a very handsome man" and "spoke well," but this did not appeal to her heart until afterwards too late on her deathbed, she remembered her "good father" and was forced, just for a moment, to reflect on the folly of her mind. The cousin did not come up to the romantic ideal of a lover she had found in the poetry she had read and the stories and tales she had devoured. When the father saw that his selection did not meet with her approval, he permitted other lovers—of course of patrician blood —to seek her hand, and hoped she would soon make her choice, and hoped too, perhaps, that, in the event,

she might find Lodovico the best of the lot. With this view, he allowed even Roderigo's suit, but she rejected the wooers one after another, and if at all she showed countenance to anybody, it was to the empty dandy whose ardour of passion had somewhat caught her simple mind. Brabantio had actually to withhold Roderigo from her favour by explaining to her that his shallowness had subsequently come to his notice, and he charged him "not to haunt" about his doors, and told him plainly —"My daughter is not for thee." Desdemona did not resent her father's admonition—she was too obedient to do aught against his will and advice—and she was quite content with the happy state she enjoyed in her father's home. She turned a deaf ear to the dull gallants who approached her with their addresses—the "wealthy curled darlings" of her nation,—shunned them, one and all, and remained quite "opposite to marriage." There was something in this condition of self-sacrifice in the service of her beloved father, which pleased her fancy, and she would not exchange it for the ordinary lot of her sex. Neither would the kind father force her into any match of his own selection. He trusted that time would teach her wisdom, and waited with hope and resignation.

IV

Such was the previous history of the damsel whose divine beauty for once upset the long-established self-control in Othello's temperament and kindled in him the love for woman, to which he had till then been a stranger. Was he going to recover his stability, this warrior who had so often fallen into the enemy's hands and regained his liberty?

It was a hopeless task. He had found the "fair

warrior" to whom he must kneel and surrender himself, and he felt something in his heart he had never before experienced. It made him quite uneasy. He loved her, had learnt to love her at the very first sight—such was the supreme spell of Desdemona's divine beauty. He felt pleasure in following the impulse—in allowing it to prevail—but he knew he was driving himself into a dangerous dream. Was it going to be realised? Would the day ever come when he could call Desdemona his own and say to her in veriest ecstacy—

> "My soul hath her content so absolute
> That not another comfort like to this
> Succeeds in unknown fate"?

It was hoping against hope. The obstacles were many and insuperable. There was the disparity in age—she had scarcely emerged from her teens, he was past two score by two or three years. There was the difference in colour—she was "whiter than snow," his was a tawny complexion, by no means inferior in his own estimate but disparaged as 'black' by the proud Venetians. Ay, *there* was the rub!—his was a different race and nationality, and in spite of any disclosure he might make regarding his royal birth, in spite of the high honour he had won in the service of the state, he would still be spurned as a foreigner unfit to aspire to the hand of any Venetian beauty of rank. His proud nature rebelled against this idea. The dream was sure to end in a rude awakening. It was impossible to be realised. *Impossible?* That was a strange sound to his ears. But after all, why should he not hope—and he almost felt it a certainty—that an angel so sweet and charming, a beauty so divine, would possess a soul free from all prejudices of race. This was the prime point to be learnt, and while he set about it with all the circumspection of a spy, he found in himself both the

chivalry of a brave gallant and the warmth of a young lover, which as yet he should carefully strive to conceal.

The welcome which Othello received at Brabantio's home was doubly grateful to him from the sweet presence of Desdemona and it induced him to narrate the story of his adventures and exploits with unusual grace and eloquence. He should not narrate it all on one day. He should do it in detail and in such graphic style as would necessarily protract it over several days and procure him repeated invitations. And so he did. The very first fragment he narrated delighted his listeners so greatly, and he put so much of spirit and feeling and gesture into it, that they were charmed and held spell-bound. Brabantio fell into the snare that was prepared for him. He liked the Moor, he "loved" him and "oft invited" him. He loved to hear the whole story of his life and questioned it "from year to year, the battles, sieges, fortunes" that he had passed, and Othello himself told us afterwards—

> "I ran it through, even from my boyish days
> To the very moment that he bade me tell it;
> Wherein I spake of most disastrous chances,
> Of moving accidents by flood and field,
> Of hair-breadth scapes i' the imminent deadly breach,
> Of being taken by the insolent foe
> And sold to slavery, of my redemption thence,
> And portance in my travels' history;
> Wherein of antres vast and deserts idle,
> Rough quarries, rocks, and hills whose heads touch heaven,
> It was my hint to speak,—such was the process,—
> And of the Cannibals that each other eat,
> The Anthropophagi and men whose heads
> Do grow beneath their shoulders."

In thus unfolding the charming romance of his life in all its detail and colouring, Othello had another motive besides gratifying the curiosity of good Brabantio. His chief interest—may we not suppose his whole interest?—lay in the other listener, for whose heart

he wished if possible to prepare a snare; and he noted with exultation how seriously Desdemona "inclined to listen" to him, how, when any household cares called her away, she dispatched them with haste and returned to "devour up" his discourse "with a greedy ear." One more effort and it would become clear whether she would step into his silken net or no.

The invitations with which Brabantio honoured his guest continued even after the story was done. They increased his friendly feeling for the foreigner and impressed him with his noble and honourable character. To Othello, they afforded frequent opportunities for observing the beauty of the soul which had already charmed him through the body, and the temptation became quite uncontrollable to him, to open his heart, to woo and—he could only accept one alternative—to win. Her beauty had captivated him, and now the angelic sweetness of her soul carried him into a trance. Her refinement and accomplishments, her quietness and gentleness of spirit, her modesty, her timidity, her innocence and simplicity, her purity of thought, word and deed, her utter unselfishness and her whole-souled devotion and affectionate obedience to her loving father—these burnt him with the most intense and unbearable passion. He was hopelessly lost in love. What a celestial bliss it would be, he thought, if that tender creeper should entwine itself around him! What an unspeakable comfort to the old father, and what a blessing and protection to the young maiden! With all, he hesitated to speak the word, though he did not abandon his hope: *he* was not the man who would abandon anything he set his heart upon. Let us note how he proceeded in his amorous enterprise.

Throughout the narration of his tale, Othello had observed with what breathless interest Desdemona

listened to him, how her bright countenance lost its colour when any "disastrous chances" overtook him, how her heart stopped its beating when "accidents" befel him, how she drew a deep, long breath when he passed through his "hair-breadth 'scapes," how she hung down her head when he was "taken by the insolent foe and sold to slavery," how her bosom heaved with joy when he obtained his "redemption," how she feared to look at him (even Brabantio noted this) when his "eyes rolled" and he dealt the fatal blow to his enemy, and how, all along, she seemed to admire his "portance" and his bravery. It became impossible for Othello to imagine that a soul so divine, so full of genuine human sympathy, could entertain any petty prejudices of race and colour; neither could he believe that a father so kind and loving as old Brabantio, whose heart was literally bound up in the happiness of his only child, would oppose her selection if she should declare herself in his favour? But this *if* must first be ascertained. How should he do it? It struck him that the same good luck which had brought him so far on the road might take him to the goal. And he was not wrong.

Now that Desdemona had manifested so much interest in his narrative and in him, it seemed to Othello that an unbroken résumé of it might impress her with greater effect and even induce her to speak out her heart. He must not however volunteer to do it but should find "a pliant hour" and "draw from her a prayer of earnest heart" that he should dilate all his pilgrimage

> "Whereof by parcels she had something heard,
> But not intentively."

The "pliant hour" was not wanting. Brabantio had imposed no restrictions on Desdemona in her relations

with Othello whom he had learnt to look upon as a friend of his family and an honourable gentleman. Besides, it had never occurred to him that the Moor might aspire to Desdemona's hand, or that, much as she admired his story, she might give it to him, an alien—she who had shunned the wealthy darlings of her own nation. He therefore saw no harm in leaving them occasionally in each other's company. Othello caught the opportunity and drew from the simple girl a request to recapitulate his narrative in its entirety. And he related it with such a pathos that she pitied him, and was "often beguiled of her tears" when he spoke of the hardships and distresses he had suffered in his youth; and when the story was done, she gave him for his pains "a world of sighs" and

> "She swore, in faith, 'twas strange, 'twas passing strange,
> 'Twas pitiful, 'twas wondrous pitiful;
> She wish'd she had not heard it, yet she wish'd
> That heaven had made her such a man."

She thanked him, and, with the most innocent candour, bade him, if he had a friend that loved her, he should but teach him how to tell his story, and "that would woo her." Othello's heart bounded with joy, for he felt that he had received the "hint" upon which he might speak.

But what was the hint Desdemona indeed gave the Moor? Did her words convey any encouragement to him to woo her? What meant her sighs and why did she wish she had not heard the story? The answer came from her own lips. She wished that heaven had made her *such a man* and added with childlike innocence, that *even one who could relate like Othello the story of such a man* would be acceptable to her heart. In the mouth of a cunning damsel, or even an ordinary girl of society, these words would of course

bear a different meaning—they would denote a clean tender of love—but artless Desdemona meant really no more than she actually said. True, she had been fascinated by the noble grandeur of the Moor, his manly qualities, his spirit of adventure, his chivalry and courage, and his lofty character; true, too, her imaginative spirit had been enraptured by the strange romance of his life and she had been impressed and delighted by the charming manner of his speech, which, despite his belief that he was not blessed with "the soft parts of conversation that chamberers have," possessed such winning grace and eloquence that the Duke and his councillors (including Brabantio) were struck dumb when they heard the tale of his wooing and the Duke couldn't help saying—

"I think this tale would win my daughter too;"

true, also, she had felt touched by love for the ideal of heroic manhood she found in the Moor, which was missing in the Venetian youths that had courted her; true, let us admit, that she even loved the Moor and wished she could marry him, wished that the objections had not existed which, she knew, her father and others were sure to raise against him; but all this only brought home to her mind with double force the heaviness of the single lot which now more than ever it was clear she must accept in her life. She felt the great pity of her situation and found relief in "a world of sighs." She could not utter a word. The Moor stared at her the while, in happy amazement. She must explain her sighs to him, and she attributed them to the "strange and pitiful" character of his tale. Was it true? The Moor stared still and smiled. She could no more disguise her mind, the simple child. She admired the Moor, she pitied him, she loved him, and she had to

subdue her love. Would he not pity her and think well of her if she told him her own little tale? And what harm if she confessed to him that he was her ideal of manhood, that she should certainly enter the wedded state, to which she remained so opposite, if she secured the hand of one who could at least boast of the fine speech he possessed? The idea of any union with the Moor himself was as far from her thoughts as she believed it was from his; and she could never have thought of any course which went against the will, pleasure or pride of her dear father,—such was her devotion to the affectionate, old man. Hers was essentially a nature (and it endured to the end of her life) which found its highest delight in self-sacrifice and rejected all inclination in pursuit of self, however much it might be combined with the beauty and grandeur of romance, which always fascinated her.

It is thus abundantly clear that Desdemona gave no hint to the Moor to woo her, but, under the spell of his pathetic tale, she innocently took him into a friendly confidence about her own pitiful mental condition, which, in spite of herself, had found vent in a succession of sighs. She gave him, indeed, no hint *to* speak, but one upon which he *might* speak (though she little thought of it) and did speak and in a manner, too, which took her completely by surprise. What did he speak and what did she say in reply? Let us not trespass on the sacred ground of this conversation, but content ourselves with hearing the touching farewell which Desdemona bade Othello that evening: "Friend Othello! you have conquered my heart which has refused to yield to so many. I love you—I am happy to confess it—and I feel proud to learn that you love me. But we must bury our loves, both of us, for our wish may not be. I know my father, I know the prejudices of my

race—our wish *cannot* be. I was born to be unfortunate, I must be content to remain as I am. But I am sorry for you and for the mischief which this hour has wrought; and I pray that Heaven may help you to be happy. May God be with you!" So they parted, Othello and Desdemona,—he with a sunken heart which made him reel, she with tears in her eyes which deprived the beautiful orbs of their vision.

V

It is a poor estimate of the love of Othello and Desdemona for each other to take it literally at the brief and misleading statement Othello afterwards made before the Senate—

> "She lov'd me for the dangers I had pass'd
> And I lov'd her that she did pity them."

And it is a mistake to ignore his previous mental condition and conduct and to imagine that Othello has explained the origin of his love in that pithy sentence of his—"Upon this hint, I spake." It is possible that he felt flattered in some measure by Desdemona's admiration for his prowess and exploits, that his pride was somewhat tickled by the hero-worship he received from a Venetian damsel who had turned away from youthful suitors of her own "clime and complexion," but these were by no means the source and origin of his love. That love had already "enfettered" his soul—to use Iago's word, though the villain said so to favour his own wicked purpose. He had already felt that she was the place where henceforth he should "garner up his heart," where he must either "live or bear no life,"—"the fountain from which his current should run or else dry up." And this feeling impelled him to speak and he would probably have spoken even without the hint

from Desdemona, which, as we have already observed, was scarcely a hint to speak. Of this intense love which flowed in Othello's heart, we get a glimpse in the memorable words which afterwards escaped from his lips at a moment when his mind was convulsed with doubt:

> "Excellent wretch! Perdition catch my soul,
> But I do love thee! and when I love thee not,
> Chaos is come again."

And chaos did come to his mind that night when he parted from Desdemona, with frustrated hope, and found himself deep in the flames of a developed, devouring passion.

If Othello's love had its origin in the wooing which followed Desdemona's hint, he could easily have forgotten it and his disappointment. But it had a deeper root and he could not pluck it out from his heart. Neither was his a nature that had learnt to look upon obstacles, however insurmountable, as hints for the abandonment of an undertaking. But how was he to effect his end? Desdemona might after all be mistaken in her fears, for Brabantio was the kindest of fathers he had seen. Why should he not consent to see his beloved daughter settled in happy matrimony with one who was not of ordinary birth and rank? It seemed to him quite certain that he would; so there was ground for renewing his petition to Desdemona. He would do it at the next opportunity.

The opportunity, however, was not forthcoming. Simple Desdemona had betrayed her appreciation of Othello to her father. They had discussed him over a dinner and the old man was startled to find that his daughter had not only learnt to admire but to care for the Moor. It was dangerous to allow her simple romantic nature to come in contact with Othello's chivalry and heroism. She was far too good a child, he knew,

to do aught that was degrading, and Othello, he was sure, was quite too honourable a man to abuse the kindness of his host. He did not think it possible that his fair Desdemona, who had refused Lodovico and other young men of Venice, would extend her hand to a Moor, whatever her admiration for him. But this admiration, were it allowed to grow, might prevent her from appreciating any of the suitors that were available, one of whom he was hoping she would see her way to accept before his grey head was brought to the grave. He therefore thought it prudent to be sparing in his invitations to Othello; at any rate he would not invite him again very soon.

Othello waited with impatience for a call. It did not come and he could wait no longer. It struck him that he might send a mediator to Desdemona, and he could think of no better person than Michael Cassio, a Florentine in the service of the state, who had "shared dangers with him" and whom he had long known as a true and honourable man, possessed of a good heart and a friendly nature. He was besides endowed with the soft graces of speech, yet could keep a secret. Othello took this good subordinate into his confidence, explained his trouble to him and besought his mediation.

Cassio was only too happy to undertake the friendly commission. When he went to Desdemona, she frankly confessed to him her love for the Moor and wished she could marry him. But she knew it was an impossible wish and had given it up. *She* felt no prejudices of rank or race, but her father who set his own value on Venetian blood and the honour of his family, would simply be shocked at the strange proposal; and she would rather endure any suffering herself than displease or disobey him and thereby send him to a premature grave. So she spoke in reply to Cassio's pleading and

dismissed him with much the same plain and pathetic negation as she had been obliged to give the Moor.

Again and again did Cassio repeat his visits to Desdemona and renew his advocacy on behalf of his general. Again did Desdemona speak "dispraisingly" of the Moor—of his race and rank and career—not indeed as *she* thought and felt, but as her father and others were sure to think and feel, about him. Cassio explained that Othello was of royal descent and was in no degree her inferior in rank and honour, and he was the most distinguished man in all Venice, by whose alliance the proudest nobleman might well feel flattered. There was no obstacle either in law or religion, and he thought that Desdemona had misjudged her father who was the kindest of parents and, he was sure, would not give in to a petty prejudice of race to the detriment of his daughter's happiness. Still, to Desdemona's mind, her father's consent appeared impossible and she prayed the Moor to forget his love and forgive her.

The repeated messages of Othello did not however fail to produce some effect on Desdemona. She began to doubt whether she might not be mistaken in regard to her father's attitude. He *might* welcome the Moor's suit after all. But how was she to know it? She could not open the subject herself to her father, and unless she was sure of his approval, she feared to let the Moor disclose to her father his love and her own. What a blessing it would have been, she thought, if her mother had been living, for she could have advised her and guided her in the situation? She had not even a friend of her own sex to whom she could confide this secret of her heart; and the maid who had long been her help in the home had recently got married and left her service. But she was going to her every now and

then, and Desdemona might well take her opinion, and it was sure to be sincere and valuable, for she had been attached to her since her mother's days, knew her father's disposition very well, and was not only her senior by six or seven years but was quite well equipped with wordly experience. So thought Desdemona at this crisis in her life, and she revealed to the maid at her next visit that the Moor was seeking her hand ; and told her, too, that he was of royal lineage. Might she accept him and would her father permit the marriage ? The maid said the idea was odd and impracticable.

The very next day, however, the good maid ran to Desdemona (was she goaded by anybody ?) and expressed her strongest approval of the match. She extolled the Moor and thought the richest damsel in Venice must feel proud to marry him. She had thought over the matter and this was her calm and mature judgment. In the immensity of his kindness and affection for her, Brabantio, she was sure, would give up any prejudice of race and colour and welcome the match ; and the whole city would hail it with joy. So spoke the maid-friend, and Desdemona was agreeably surprised at her enthusiastic commendation and said she would permit the Moor to reveal his suit to her father and beseech his consent. Nor was it long before she communicated her mind to him, for Cassio went there soon after the maid left and had the happiness to receive the welcome message to his general. Four hearts were soon filled with gladness by one resolve, each on its own account.

It is impossible to say with certainty what would have been the course of events if Othello had approached Brabantio with his suit, revealed to him the progress which had already been made and begged his pardon and consent. Possibly, the old man might have "taken

up the mangled matter at the best" and sanctioned their marriage. There was no insuperable objection against it, and the love for an only child might have overcome his prejudice of race, and no one would have raised his voice against him. How good it had been then for both Othello and Desdemona to have had the support of the father and the shelter of his roof! How auspicious for their future to have commenced their wedded life with the father's blessing instead of with an apparent curse which involuntarily escaped from his grief-bitten soul! But fate had destined a different course for the lovers. It had already touched the mediation which resulted in Desdemona's message to the Moor, and now it approached Othello in the shape of an "honest" friend to divert him from the path of happiness.

VI

Let us now contemplate the picture of this honest friend who hails by the name of IAGO. To all outward seeming, this ancient of the Moor is a bluff, outspoken soldier, blunt in manners and rough of tongue, but sincere and trustworthy and perfectly harmless and well-meaning. Of a hearty and cheerful temperament, he passes for a merry knave in company and can entertain his friends with jest and song and otherwise contribute to their mirth and amusement. He is full of cynicism and, according to his own confession, "nothing if not critical." He never flatters anybody, speaks plain truths in their face and cares a rush about what others say or think of him. But he is not wanting in fellow-feeling and unselfish friendship, and those in need of help ever find him a true and sympathetic friend. He is a downright honest man with everybody. He has no book-learning to boast of, but his common-sense is

quite conspicuous, and though only twenty-eight, he has observed the world well, "knows all qualities, with a learned spirit of human dealings," takes a plain, practical view of everything and strikes one altogether as a simple, contented, happy fellow.

Such is the impression which Iago produces on those who come in contact with him, but in truth he is the very reverse of a good, sincere, straightforward man and is full of malice and discontent, evil intentions and wicked designs. He is indeed the "arch-criminal" not only of Shakespearean drama but of all drama and fiction, and the poet has portrayed him in such extreme shades of darkness that critics have often felt disposed to doubt his existence. But he does exist though he is a rare, very rare being. Not all may come across an Iago in a life-time, but his brood are many. He alone is the actual devil without the cloven feet, combining in himself all the craft and cunning, all the villany and wickedness of his race. It is impossible to imagine a more depraved or a more dangerous person. He is the incarnation of egotism and envy,—"not the petty envy which is content with coveting another's honours and possessions, or with holding itself more deserving of another's good fortune, but that eternal envy which merit or success in others never fails to irritate." His soul is full of evil. He is "more fell than anguish, hunger, or the sea" and pushes through his wicked designs with the most marvellous skill and coolness and self-collectedness. He ever tries to kill two birds with one stone. His plans are inexhaustible and he can instantly adjust them to any turn of events. His wits never fail him. He is never confused, never at a loss for an expedient, and decides quickly in an emergency, his "invention" coming quite readily from his pate. He never shrinks from anything. He knows

that he works "by wit, not by witchcraft" and is fully capable of the patience he preaches to his dupe. By no means is he, as some critics have imagined, "quite as indifferent to his own fate as that of others, running all risk for a trifling and doubtful advantage." To him there is no risk at any time, so absolute is the confidence he feels in his powers; and he is ever alert and watchful and far-seeing, leaving nothing to chance and ascertaining his security at every stage.

This master-villain has never known any god but self and is always on the look-out for opportunities to secure an advantage or even for pure evil-doing. He understands the needs and weaknesses of others, approaches them like an honest friend and ruins them eventually. The cloak of bluffness and roughness which covers the plebeian soldier helps him to take in everybody. He is indeed an adept in the arts of simulation and dissimulation, can assume real feelings or disguise them at will, can be arrogant or humble, commanding or conciliatory, indignant or insinuating, according to occasion. He can praise people or talk ill of them as it suits him, and can convert angels and devils alike into agents for achieving his wicked ends. What is more remarkable still, he can use others for his purposes while deceiving and ruining them in reality. Thus, he makes the noble Moor an ass and leads him by the nose and, while wantonly practising upon his peace and quiet, he impresses him as an "honest creature" who "sees and knows more, much more than he unfolds" and "hates the slime that sticks on filthy deeds." He counsels and commands his gull Roderigo with all the love and liberty of a well-meaning old friend and has simply to say—"Lay thy finger thus, and let thy soul be instructed," to make him obey his every behest; and while pretending to help him in his suit and using his purse

as his own, he employs him as a "shield and weapon for his own designs and deeds." He knows the vulnerable point of Cassio, incites him to drink and gets him into a brawl which puts an end to his lieutenancy to his advantage. Not content with this, he advises him to regain his place through the intercession of the general's wife and even undertakes to arrange for their interview by "drawing the Moor out of the way." And he appears to do all this in such "sincerity of love and honest kindness" that Cassio thanks him most heartily and says, "I never knew a Florentine more kind and honest." Even innocent, heavenly Desdemona he cannot spare, but "will turn her virtue into pitch and out of her own goodness" and kind pleading with Othello on Cassio's behalf "make the net that shall enmesh them all." And when he has done it, that simple lady still looks upon him as "good Iago" and seeks his advice and implores him, "good friend" that he is, for help to win her lord again. Indeed, such a deep, disguised, artful villain is this Iago that his own wife Emilia—whose wedded life of not quite a year has revealed to her the nature of her man and convinced her that "men were but stomachs and women were but food," and who, to please him and be rid of his continual pestering and fault-finding, now and then did his wicked biddings in petty things—even she feels sure that her husband is not "such a villain" as would have told the Moor the "odious, damnèd, wicked lie," that his wife, her beloved mistress, was false to wedlock. When, after witnessing the outburst of Othello's rage against Desdemona, Emilia says—

"I will be hang'd, if some eternal villain,
Some busy and insinuating rogue,
Some cogging, cozening slave, to get some office,
Have not devis'd this slander; I'll be hang'd else;"—

Iago emphatically denies the existence of such a man:

> "Fie! there is no such man; it is impossible."

Yes, it does seem impossible, and, as has been well said, it is under shelter of this general belief in the impossibility of utter turpitude that a king like Claudius or an officer like Iago can exist in this world.

But Claudius is at least capable of an illicit love for the Queen whom he eventually marries, and he occasionally betrays a sting of conscience and a desire to be saved. Iago is devoid both of love and lust, not even for such a divine being as Desdemona, though he would fain reason himself into love as he did into jealousy. When he says—

> "Now, I do love her too;
> Not out of absolute lust, though peradventure
> I stand accountant for as great a sin,
> But partly led to diet my revenge,
> For that I do suspect the lusty Moor
> Hath leap'd into my seat:"—

it is quite clear he is trying to believe against himself in the existence of at least a spark of love in his heart for Desdemona. But in truth, in Iago's view, love is a sin, a mere "lust of the blood and a permission of the will." Self-love is all he knows and values, and he has no opinion of anybody who does not know to love himself. To him, a charming woman like Desdemona is but a "guinea-hen" and he "would rather change his humanity for a baboon" than drown himself for her love. Indeed he has no soul for beauty and love, no faith in virtue, no care for reputation. Says this moralist—

> "Virtue! a fig! 'tis in ourselves that we are thus or thus. Our bodies are our gardens, to the which our wills are gardeners; so that if we will plant nettles, or sow lettuce, set hyssop and weed up thyme, supply it with one gender of herbs, or distract it with many, either to have it sterile with idleness, or manured with industry, why, the power and corrigible authority of this lies in our wills."

Reputation, according to Iago, is "an idle and most

false imposition," and though he expresses himself differently to the Moor to excite his feelings, an injury to one's honour and good name is, according to his true feeling, of less consequence than a bodily wound. He has absolutely no admiration for goodness and no faith in feminine chastity. To him Desdemona is no better than any other woman. "Supersubtle Venetian" as she is, she must know how to deceive her husband and will do so very soon. She loved the Moor "for bragging and telling her fantastical lies" but she cannot long continue to love the "devil." "Her eye must be fed"—"she must change for youth." "She must have change, she must: therefore put money in thy purse"—this is the hope he holds forth and the advice he gives to Roderigo whom he professes to befriend and help. In Cyprus, he tells the dupe that this change of love is imminent, that Desdemona had already cast her eye on Cassio, and he describes him as

"A knave very voluble; no further conscionable than in putting on the mere form of civil and humane seeming, for the better compassing of his salt and most hidden loose affection . . . . a devilish knave! Besides, the knave is handsome, young, and hath all those requisites in him that folly and green minds look after: a pestilent complete knave."

Roderigo, however, cannot believe it of Desdemona, for he is sure "she is full of the most blessed condition," but Iago rebukes him in language which clearly discovers the "atheist of human virtue."

"*Iago.* Blessed fig's end! the wine she drinks is made of grapes; if she had been blessed, she would never have loved the Moor. Blessed pudding! Didst thou not see her paddle with the palm of his hand? didst not mark that?

"*Rod.* Yes, that I did; but that was but courtesy.

"*Iago.* Lechery, by this hand; an index and obscure prologue to the history of lust and foul thoughts. They met so near with their lips that their breaths embraced together. Villanous thoughts, Roderigo! . . ."

Indeed, Iago has no belief in the existence of moral

excellence in either man or woman. In his creed, all men are either knaves or fools, and all women strumpets, and if any "deserving woman" does exist, she is fit only "to suckle fools." To him, as to Hamlet, the world is "full of things rank and gross in nature," but he is not weary of it like the Danish prince nor dissatisfied with it like Timon. He will yet live and make the best of it; and having cast off all allegiance to morality and closed his heart to all generous impulses and feelings, showing no inclination even to sensualities and troubled by no tender affections and sentiments, holding nothing sacred except his own advantage, at the sacrifice, it may be, of others' happiness and others' lives, he serves himself with a determination of will and a keenness of intellect which have earned for him that terse phrase of Coleridge—"all will in intellect."

Iago, certainly, has no heart which is susceptible to the "common life sympathies of flesh and blood," and he has next to no conscience. As Schlegel observes, he is cold, unfeeling calculation throughout, and his head is as acute as his heart is hard. He matures and carries out his diabolical designs without the least regard for others' sufferings and he does not hesitate to make the most innocent people his victims if he can thereby serve himself or if his schemes or security require it under the remotest contingency. Once he sets his devilry in motion, he can watch its working with quite fiendish glee and feel proud of it at every stage. Thus, while inveighling Cassio to his ruin, he can sing a jingling song and throw himself and the company into mirth:

"And let me the canakin clink, clink!
And let me the canakin clink!
A soldier's a man;
Oh, man's life 's but a span;
Why, then, let a soldier drink!"

With the delight of a devil, he can likewise mark the Moor "changing with his poison," and when he finds the poor man completely "on the rack," he can reflect, almost with a feeling of ecstasy—

> "Not poppy, nor mandragora,
> Nor all the drowsy syrups of the world,
> Shall ever medicine thee to that sweet sleep
> Which thou ow'dst yesterday."

And he is not moved even when the good general falls into a swoon, but gloats on his success like a very ghoul:

> "Work on,
> My medicine, work! Thus credulous fools are caught:
> And many worthy and chaste dames even thus,
> All guiltless, meet reproach."

In spite of his depraved opinion of woman, it heightens the glory of his achievement and his satisfaction for the moment, to grant that there are "worthy and chaste dames" in the world and to reflect that he has been successful in bringing "reproach" on the head of one of them, all guiltless and innocent. No matter if she had done him no wrong, no matter if she is a divine angel deserving of love and worship, yet he must ruin her happiness; and even when he knows for certain that her end is near, and in consequence solely of his diablerie, he can, like a true, sincere, sympathetic friend, tell her, when she pours out the trouble in her heart and seeks his help, to "go in and weep not" and assure her, too, that "all things shall be well," while really wishing and expecting the speedy conclusion and consummation of his infernal machination.

It is simply shocking, the callosity and complacency with which this man-devil devises, develops and carries out his wicked designs, and the spectacle of his base and abominable villany would be positively unbearable, were it not, as Schlegel observes, for the interest experienced in watching the marvellous skill and versatility

with which his intellect finds and adjusts its means and engineers the plot from start to finish. Commencing his evil work with the motive of revenge against his general for his having deprived him of promotion which, in his own opinion, he had richly deserved, this malevolent man subsequently reasons himself into so many other and imaginary motives, and involves and works the ruin and sacrifice of so many innocent lives, that it is impossible to believe he is really actuated by aught but his innate malignity. He evidently feels an intellectual pride in the performance of villanous deeds and finds delight in the sufferings of others. His soul knows no distinction between good and evil or rather manifests a marked preference for the latter. He is absolutely inaccessible to any pangs of remorse, but being made in the image of God, he betrays the merest trace of a conscience in his repeated efforts to persuade himself that he is not acting without just and proper motives. Even that is buried deep under the deadening weight of his evil propensities. As Coleridge has rightly remarked, it is the mere "motive-hunting of a motiveless malignity" which this man-fiend discloses when he endeavours to deceive himself into a sort of half-belief that Othello and Cassio have been criminally intimate with his wife and that perhaps he is himself in love with Desdemona, which, in his code of morality, would furnish ample justification for his nefarious crimes. But even this motive-hunting is not attempted with regard to the other persons he involves in his wicked schemes, and nothing but the most detestable service and safe-guarding of self can explain his heartless murder of Roderigo and of his own wife, and the intrigue he readily conceives and tries to start against Bianca. It makes one suspect that the motive, he starts with, of the injustice he had experienced in the matter of promotion, might likewise

be a pure fabrication of his motive-hunting malignity. To be sure, nothing can account or furnish a sufficient excuse for the many atrocities which this wicked monster perpetrates. The restless spirit of the devil which fills him can alone explain his deeds. It sets his energies in motion on some imaginary pretext, and he goes on without hitch or hindrance, sorrow or scruple, winding his way where necessary and sweeping all before him in his path of destruction. Indeed, he makes no secret of it but identifies himself with the devil and glories in his " divinity of hell," reflecting with the most barefaced satisfaction—

> "When devils will the blackest sins put on,
> They do suggest at first with heavenly shows,
> As I do now."

There can be little doubt that Iago delights in evil-doing for its own sake, that the excellence or prosperity of others is ever an eyesore to him and his evil genius can rest contented only by reducing it and destroying it if possible. It is not therefore at all surprising that the happy feelings with which Othello and Desdemona greet each other in Cyprus make him perfectly miserable and he gives vent to his heartache in no ambiguous strain :

> " Oh, you are well tuned now!
> But I'll set down the pegs that make this music,
> As honest as I am."

He is evidently put out even by the good opinion which others may entertain about him when any one chances to secure so much as a temporary advantage or felicity through his means.

This Iago, too truly, is a serpent whose very breath is full of venom and blasts everything and everybody that comes near. He however continually tries to pass for the ordinary serpent and would, if possible, convince

himself he is no serpent at all. But this only serves to spur him on in his venomous course. Iago stands head and shoulders above other villains of the poet's creation—Iachimo and Claudius, the bastard Edmund and hunchback Richard—and is distinguished from them all by this singular circumstance, that he does not reveal himself even in his monologues and would cheat himself to give edge to his villany! How he tries to fancy that he is no worse than an amorous scamp inflamed with love for Desdemona! How he wishes to give himself the rôle of a revengeful man and tries to believe he has been cuckolded and the thought of it "doth, like a poisonous mineral, gnaw his inwards"! Yet, how absolute his incapacity both for love and the feeling of jealousy he pretends to, and how easily his gnawing pain can be soothed, according to his own avowal! His soul will be content if he is "even'd" with Othello, "wife for wife," or failing it, if he put him "at least into a jealousy so strong that judgment cannot cure"! It is evident that Iago is impelled not by any biting pain of jealousy in his own heart but by the diabolical desire of seeing a happy individual tortured by it and made disconsolate and miserable. No wonder the demi-devil refuses to disclose his motives when, at last, ruin having come upon his plans, he is asked "why he had ensnared Othello soul and body." He only says—

> "Demand me nothing: what you know, you know;
> From this time forth I never will speak word."

But it is a mistake to suppose that he sticks to his determination or that torments are required or employed to "ope his lips." He had "in part confess'd his villany," (what part and with what object we shall see at the end) and just now he would hold his peace and prepare for a last effort to save himself from the torture which

awaited him. Very soon, however, he will speak, not indeed, as Swinburne fancies, like the tortured philosopher to tell his tormentors "that they did but bruise the coating, batter the crust, or break the shell of Iago," but to escape punishment altogether. And it is not unlikely that, in the régime of good Cassio, he manages to explain away every thing and passes for the most honest man alive! For, to be sure, he is an eternal villain, with infinite resource for saving himself even at the very last moment and from the most hopeless situation.

VII

How this vile wretch came to choose the military profession, it is not difficult to guess. Possibly, he considered it the best field where his cunning could be employed to advantage,—against the enemy in time of war and his own simple comrades in time of peace; and it was probably the only profession into which he could get a ready entrance. It was certainly not any spirit of restless patriotism or reckless bravery that had driven him to enlist himself as a soldier but the chance which seemed to exist of achieving fame and glory by risking others' lives. He would ever take good care of himself while pretending to be fearless and daring, and by artful dissimulation he felt sure he could easily establish for himself a reputation for bravery and courage. Whatever the measure of success which attended this calculation of his, it is certain he has been pretty long in the army under the generalship of Othello, and had served in the field "at Rhodes, at Cyprus and on other grounds, Christen'd and heathen;" and it is certain, too, he passed for a "valiant fellow" with all, though we afterwards find he loved nothing better than his own life and would never risk it in the most critical situation. His general,

however, did not form the same opinion of his abilities as he had hoped he would, for when the occasion arose for his choosing a lieutenant, he appointed a comparative junior in service, Michael Cassio, to that position, conferring on Iago no higher place than that of 'ancient' or standard-bearer. The superceded soldier, we see, depreciates the new lieutenant as a mere "arithmetician" and "counter-caster"—one

> "That never set a squadron in the field,
> Nor the division of a battle knows
> More than a spinster"—

and affirms that "mere prattle, without practice, is all his soldiership." But he says all this to Roderigo, evidently to make out a grievance against his general, so to unite himself with his dupe in a common cause against the foreigner whom now both have reason to hate. He therefore not only deplores that

> "Preferment goes by letter and affection,
> And not by old gradation, where each second
> Stood heir to the first"

but also explains that he spared no pains to get the place which was his by right, that three great ones of the city, in personal suit to make him his lieutenant, off-capped to Othello, but he, as loving his own pride and purposes, evaded them "with a bombast circumstance, horribly stuff'd with epithets of war" and nonsuited the mediators by telling them he had already chosen his officer. This is on the face of it a fib, an invention of his pate, given out, without the least risk of verification, to strengthen the attachment of Roderigo, and we need no more believe that Iago had made any exertion to get the lieutenant's place (Othello would not in that case have so easily trusted the friendly professions of one on whose behalf he had rejected all recommendation) than that a practised military man of

ability was set aside in favour of an incompetent and inexperienced junior. Whatever his shortcomings, Othello was undoubtedly an expert in military matters and was not in the least degree open to the influence of favouritism. Ever true to the call of duty, he would as readily forego the happy company of his sweet angel as dismiss Cassio for delinquency and make an example of him, much as he loved him and remembered his friendly services. We may therefore take it that Othello had appointed Cassio as lieutenant because he was really an able man and that he thereby did no injustice whatever to Iago. Indeed, Iago himself attests to the high competency of Cassio when he tells Montano, in direct contradiction of the opinion he had expressed to Roderigo, that, except for one "ingraft infirmity"—his inability to stand drink—Cassio

> "Is a soldier fit to stand by Cæsar
> And give direction."

And we subsequently find that even the Senate are not ignorant of the superior qualifications of the Florentine (very likely his services had been entertained for the same reason as the Moor's), for they appoint him as the successor of Othello, in preference to Montano who, we are told, is a capable and worthy officer "of great fame in Cyprus" and with a name which is "great in mouths of wisest censure."

Far from manifesting any disappointment at his supercession and quite far from striving to secure his ambition through the humble channel of recommendation, Iago, we may be sure, cunningly acquiesced in the appointment of Cassio and even acknowledged his superior abilities before Othello, whilst wishing the ruin of both in his heart. For, in fact, it is not any feeling of disappointed ambition or injustice experienced and consequent thirst for revenge, which disposes this man to wicked deeds—

that would make him a far lesser villain than he really is—but the sheer inherent malignity of his soul and his "yellow-green, venomous envy" which hates and detests others' excellences and boils and swells at the sight of others' superiority and distinction.

On his return to the metropolis at the conclusion of the wars, the evil genius of Iago received a powerful stimulus, and there seemed to be ample scope for its exercise in the long period of peace which was expected to follow. The unique services which Othello had rendered to the state of Venice extracted the admiration and love of the people and filled their hearts with pride and gratitude. Iago alone hated the general. The fame and glory which greeted him from every side kindled the malevolence of this human fiend and he could not help resolving upon mischief against him; nay, he found justification for it in the fact that he was a foreigner. Was it not truly patriotic to ruin him and save the state from the humiliation of adoring a foreigner as its hero? This was the motive (and he never omits to find one, however false) with which his wicked soul began its evil-brooding, and the preferment of Cassio—a foreigner, too—furnished him an additional and more substantial pretext. He should bring about the downfall of both foreigners as soon as possible, but he must bide his time with patience and watch for opportunities.

Yet another person came under the evil gaze of this enemy of the human race. The rare virtues of Desdemona and her rejection of the many lovers who had sought her hand, had for some time been the talk of the city. Would it not be a master feat for him to pull down this paragon of perfection from her high pedestal? Well—it was not impossible. But the way was not quite clear; it was "yet confused:"

"Knavery's plain face is never seen till used."

But why should he not marry and settle down in life now that there was no prospect of war for a long time to come? And who was better fitted to be his wife and partner (and helper, as he would understand) in life than Emilia, the maid of Desdemona? And she would be so serviceable in so many things.

It did not take long, neither did it cost Iago much trouble, to get through this initial stage of his evil campaign. (To a villain of Iago's grain, even marriage is but a means to the accomplishment of nefarious ends!) Emilia was at first unwilling to marry at all and leave her mistress, such was her devotion to the damsel, but Brabantio and his kinsmen lectured to her, and Desdemona, too, was for her marrying; so she yielded at last. Brabantio hoped that his dear daughter might soon follow the example of the maid, but Desdemona only wished that the good maid's happiness should not suffer by her own resolution. Anyhow, the event took place amidst the good wishes of all. And we may fancy there were presents to the pair from Desdemona and her father as well as from Othello and Cassio, and every one congratulated the ancient on his happy acquisition, while Emilia felt proud to shake hands with the great general of Venice and his lieutenant.

VIII

It is needless to observe that Iago's evil soul did not receive any stupefaction from the soothing influence of wedded life. To his heart, the high fame of Othello and the welcome he was daily receiving from the noblity of Venice were rankest poisons which ate into its very essence. Cassio, too, was in his books, and Desdemona as well; but no immediate prospect presented itself for the satiation of his vicious appetite upon them.

He was not however left to starve. His marriage with Emilia kept him in touch with the current of Desdemona's life and it was not long before the persistent and forbidden suit of wealthy Roderigo came to his knowledge and afforded him present and profitable game. To him, it was mere child's play to get this infatuated youth under his grip and bleed him almost to exhaustion. Who but Iago the husband of Emilia the devoted maid of Desdemona could help the young suitor to succeed in his forlorn hope? And suspicious as he was, Roderigo placed himself completely under the direction of his friend and gave the strings of his purse into his honest hands. Iago, it was plain, was no cheat, for, at his bidding, Emilia was frequently going errands to Desdemona and bringing hopeful news, which was always duly communicated to the trusting aspirant. More money and more time, and it was impossible for things to go amiss. So said Iago, and Roderigo hoped and believed in spite of his occasional unbelief.

Iago was not however destined to wait indefinitely for the accomplishment of his cherished designs. The fate which watched the progress of Othello's love-suit to Desdemona chose this crafty soldier as its instrument. Emilia's frequent visits to her mistress (which Iago encouraged her to pay in consideration and continuation of the former attachment) brought the most unexpected good luck to his schemes. The very evening that Desdemona took the maid into confidence and sought her counsel in regard to the Moor's suit, she revealed it to her husband and told him, too, that she had given her voice against it. "Stupid girl!" ejaculated Iago, "I wonder what makes you unwilling to see your mistress settled in matrimony. I fancy you are tired of the bond yourself and would like to put an end to it if you could."

Emilia stared in utter amazement and confusion. It was no difficult task to convince her that Othello's proposal was a godsend to the girl and she should be most foolish and unlucky to reject it. He praised her high virtues and pitied her condition and felt sure her union with the Moor would be a most happy one, for he would prove to her a most dear and loving husband. And it was absurd to think that the good old father would not readily welcome the match and sanction it with the greatest pleasure.

Emilia was satisfied that she had misjudged the matter and undertook to set it right the very next day, which, as we have already seen, she did. When she returned, gladness beamed in her eyes, and with a feeling of relief she told her husband that Desdemona had agreed to accept Othello's hand and to permit him to approach her father with his proposal.

"Folly again!" exclaimed the knowing man, "You have made a muddle of it. You women lack the merest common-sense. *The Moor to approach the father with his proposal!*—what on earth could be more ill-advised? The thing would fail altogether. It must be done ere the old man gets scent and all will go well."

"Impossible!" said Emilia with emphasis, "She could *never* do it. It would break the old man's heart."

"Break the old man's fiddle-stick!" retorted Iago in a tone of reproof. "Reserve, please, your simple wisdom for a while and leave the business to me. I'll speak to the Moor and see it through without a hitch. I *must* do it for the sake of the dear damsel—oh, she was so good and kind to us at our wedding, and is such a heavenly creature, too, any one should feel proud to do her a service."

Emilia bowed to the superior wisdom of her husband and agreed to place herself completely under his direc-

tion. The happiness of her beloved mistress was what she ardently desired and she would do anything to secure it.

Iago lost no time in going to Othello after this revelation. He approached him with a thousand apologies for the intrusion. He had his general's happiness next his heart and was ready to lay down his life, if necessary, for his sake. He had already taken a humble part, quite unsolicited, in influencing and inducing Desdemona to give her assent to the Moor's proposal. This he had done through his wife, but now the affair was in danger of falling through, and he hoped, humble and insignificant as he was, his opinion and advice would receive the best consideration. He was sure the general's wish would fail of fulfilment should he reveal the matter to Brabantio and seek his consent beforehand. However unbounded the old man's affection for his daughter, there were other people to be reckoned with —the kith and kin and the gentle folk—whose prejudices might turn the scale the other way, and he knew, in his own small experience of the world, especially amongst Venetians, the straightest course was not always the safest nor the surest road to success. There were, too, in Venice, so many rejected lovers of the damsel, who would work against Othello. If he really wished with all his heart that she should become his—ah, how happy he and Emilia should feel to see them united in wedlock!—he should marry her in secret and then beg the father for his blessing. No one would raise his voice against him after the event. It would be a two hours' trial to the feelings and all will go well afterwards. That was the course the general must adopt, or he should give up the idea altogether.

Othello felt puzzled and perplexed in the extreme. There was no doubt much truth and sense in the plain

words and advice of this honest fellow. He was glad to hear of the part he had already played through Emilia, glad too he had made bold to speak out his mind in the matter. He had not come to him a moment too soon, and it seemed as if some unseen power was watching the course of events and helped him on in his aim. He should, in any case, think twice before he acted, but was it possible to induce Desdemona to consent to a secret wedding? And was there nothing dishonourable in the course? "All is fair in love and war" said Iago, "and there is nothing to be ashamed of in a secret wedding. Far from it, there is always something romantic about it and secret weddings are by no means uncommon events in Venice." As to securing Desdemona's consent, he begged that it should be left to him and his wife whose services he would place at the general's feet. She would go to him to receive his commands and would of course feel more pleasure in obeying them than any from her humble husband. Othello smiled in appreciation of the ancient's loving words and thanked him for his kindness; but he was confused in mind and would take time to decide how he should act.

Iago, let us note, did not tell Othello that he was aware of Cassio's mediation—he should not make it a council of three if he could help it. Neither did Othello choose to tell Iago about it, for there was no need to do so. Did the general tell Cassio about Iago's interview and seek his opinion and advice regarding the suggestion of secret marriage? More likely than not he did, and if he did, Cassio would speak approvingly of the new course. Any way there was no harm in trying it (the other course was always open) and Emilia, no doubt, was the properest person to manage it. It were best that Cassio should remain in the background

altogether. So when Othello met his ancient the next day, he told him that he entirely approved of his suggestion and would gladly place himself under obligation to his wife for her services.

When Emilia went to Desdemona with the new message from the Moor, the poor girl was simply frightened out of her wits. She was almost inclined to weep. "Am I that kind, my good Emilia," said she, in a tremulous voice, "that would stoop to do this disgraceful deed? Well hath the Moor rewarded me for my folly! Good God, save me from temptation and forgive me the sin I have already committed of keeping aught from my father's knowledge. Save me, oh, save me from bringing woe and shame on my dear father's head."

Emilia was quite moved by the effect her message produced on Desdemona and herself would have dropped the matter at that stage. But she had the instructions of her husband against all contingencies and was bound to obey them. She soothed the heart of the simple damsel by telling her that the Moor was not at all to blame in the matter, that she and her husband were primarily responsible for the suggestion which seemed to hurt her so much, but which in all sincerity they believed was for her good, and she would still press it upon her calm consideration and judgment. There was no danger in revealing the proposal to her father and no difficulty in obtaining his consent —*he* would certainly welcome the match and hail the prospect of his dear child's happiness. But other people and their prejudices might influence him and end the thing in a fiasco. This had to be guarded against, and to be sure, there was nothing disgraceful or dishonourable about a secret wedding. For her own part, she should have been charmed if her own

had been a secret marriage and taken the world by surprise. Secrecy is the spice of love, she added, and the love which leads to marriage is sanction enough for anything. Desdemona listened, her eyes wide open, and could only say when the maid concluded her speech, "Begone, thou temptress!" But the words were accompanied with a suppressed smile which told Emilia that her visit had not been in vain.

The result of the errand was duly communicated by Emilia to the Moor, and the Moor (of course after consultation with his friend) duly commissioned her to repeat her visits, and Emilia went to her mistress once and again. But Desdemona was quite firm in her resolve and would not listen to any proposal which should keep her beloved father in the dark. She had considered the matter over and over again, and much as she felt sure that, in his infinite kindness and affection, her father would readily forgive any fault of hers and accord his sanction to her choice, she felt it impossible to go the length of marrying without his knowledge and blessing. She was sorry for the liberty she had already allowed herself, and wished she could recall it or make a clean breast of it to her father and clear the taint which had touched her conscience; but how could she do it, a bashful young woman to a man even though he was her own dear father? If her mother had been living, she could have crept into her feminine bosom and unburdened her secret there. But now, alas, she must swallow her trouble and only hope that her transgression would not assume a graver tint. She saw the danger of the temptation at hand and was determined to resist it with all her might. So, in spite of her ingenious pleading (which she conducted under the able guidance of her husband), Emilia grew less and less hopeful at each succeeding interview.

Emilia, of course, believed she was advising her mistress for her good. It pleased her to think that she was serving three persons by her mediation. The great general of Venice had sought her help—should she not oblige him? Her own husband left her no peace at home and goaded her with instructions, and of course did so with the best of intentions. Desdemona, too, she felt sure, would feel thankful to her in the end. It was high time for her to marry and get settled in life, and though a foreigner was not perhaps the most desirable husband, yet it was a strong whim of the girl (and she had whims nobody could turn her from and had rejected the best of her own countrymen), so it was better she married somebody than nobody; and her personal experience had not convinced her that her countrymen were gods who made the best husbands and others were not. She would herself have preferred that the marriage should take place with the knowledge and consent of the father, but wise people thought otherwise and she had to obey them and counsel Desdemona again and again to make up her mind for a secret wedding. Desdemona felt greatly bewildered, for she knew Emilia to be a loving maid, interested in her happiness, but she stuck to her resolve with the instinct of religious faith and closed her ears to all persuasion.

IX

Othello gave up all hope of a secret marriage and decided to approach Brabantio with his proposal, and would have done so but for the tidings which suddenly arrived and played into Iago's hands. The Turks, it appeared, were preparing to send a fleet to attack Cyprus, and Othello was ordered to be in readiness to start in case the news should be confirmed. The

warrior instantly buried all idea of his marriage and would allow nothing to engage his thoughts except the impending war; but Iago made a last effort all the same to make the Moor renew his prayer to Desdemona. "This news is a godsend" said he to the general, "to bless you with the best damsel of Venice. Now or never is your opportunity. Your need to the state is greatest at this moment, and no senator or nobleman, not even the Duke, can fail to hail your marriage with delight. But it must be done ere it is known."

Another message to Desdemona only brought a more decided expression of her determination; but Iago was not to be foiled in his plans. "One more effort" said the honest ancient to the Moor, "and this shall be the very last." And indeed it was a most touching message which Iago suggested, and Othello admired, and Emilia carefully conned and repeated to Desdemona whom an evil fate was already watching to overthrow.

"I am sorry" said the good maid to her mistress," to trouble you so often about the same matter, but I do it as a matter of duty and I assure you this shall be my last say. Howsoever you may receive it, I only hope that no mishap may ensue from the dream into which the Moor has allowed himself to be dragged." Desdemona stared a wild look while the maid continued: "He fears the coming war is his summons to the next word—fears the time has come when his glory must set and the country of his adoption must suffer a disaster." "And why so?" asked the timid girl, quite alarmed. "Why so!" echoed the maid, "Ah, the Moor goes to the war without his wits. If he made you his by marriage, he should find himself strong enough to march victoriously through both hemispheres, but now he must go with a heavy and sluggish

heart, for on the eve of this impending war he cannot think of approaching your father with his proposal. He feels utterly undone, but all the same he thanks you for your love and sends you his, and bids me tell you that his dying heart will not fail to speak your sweet name in its ceasing sounds."

Desdemona's eyes were filled with tears. Her heart was moved with pity. She did not know what to do or what to say. She was grieved to think that any calamity should befal the hero whom she had learnt to love and worship, and she was unwilling to proceed a step further, without her father's knowledge, in the path in which she felt she had already advanced too far of her own accord. To sacrifice herself she was quite prepared, but how could she bring shame or sorrow on her father's head or occasion any mischance to the Moor? "Alas!" she cried in a tone of helplessness, "Alas, what shall I do! I feel myself quite at the extremity. Shall I topple over?"—and tears rained profusely on her pretty bosom.

"Fie, child!" reproved Emilia, "what is this silliness that I see? Was Emilia born to make you weep? Oh, don't, dear heart, don't weep!" And she removed the snow-white hands from the celestial face which they hid, and kissed them; and, taking out her kerchief, wiped the tears which flowed in profusion and added in a most touching tone: "You know, my gentle lady, your good mother entrusted you to my care, and I have vowed to be with you through thick and thin, despite I have married. I will give up anything for your sake, my life not excepted."

Since her mother's death, Desdemona had not known another feminine voice which spoke to her so tenderly and affectionately as her good maid Emilia's; and now she was so overpowered by her kind words and sym-

pathy that she felt inclined to resign herself into her hands and asked, "What shall I do, my good Emilia? Shall I take a leap in the dark? I have no power to think."

"Nothing of the kind assured Emilia. "Do follow our lead in this one matter and all shall go well. My husband will arrange a place quite near and everything will be over in an hour's time. I will accompany you to and fro and not a soul can know what has taken place."

"And then?" enquired the dumbfoundered damsel of her maid.

"And then," resumed the well-meaning counsellor, "nothing need be revealed until my lord returns from the war. And what a glorious return it shall be! He shall deserve your love twice over by the new victories he will win in your dear name, and all the while he is away you could waft your loving prayers over the sea and inspire him with strength and courage to earn new laurels unto his crown."

Emilia paused as Desdemona closed her eyes in meditation. "I cannot think for myself," said the damsel to the maid, "I have lost all power. Are you quite sure, good Emilia, no harm will come to any one from the course you recommend?"

"Quite sure," answered the maid in a tone which indicated absolute certainty, "and my husband who knows the world well thinks it is the very best course for you to follow."

"And does my lord Othello—"

"Yes," said the maid without waiting for the question, "he thinks the same; and he prays you to strengthen yourself if only to save his life."

"And when shall it be?" asked the ill-fated maiden.

"To-night," readily replied Emilia, "this very night,

I shall be at your door ere the clock strikes twelve, and if you steal down at the hour, I could take you and bring you back, all in a trice. Do make up your mind, child, and be bold and cheerful."

Desdemona trembled at the bare thought of what she was going to do, yet the answer escaped her lips, almost without her knowledge, "Yes, be it so. May God forgive me and help me!" It was an answer which sealed the fate of many persons at once.

Thus did the devil Iago reach the first stage of success in his nefarious schemes; and it is scarcely necessary to repeat that neither love for his general nor any sincere wish for the happiness of the Venetian damsel induced this wicked Italian to interest himself so deeply in the suggestion of this secret marriage. He believed that if Othello approached Brabantio with his daring proposal, he would meet with nothing worse than a severe check from the old man; but it would be otherwise if the marriage was concluded in secrecy. It would drive the injured father mad with rage and set the whole city against the general. He would be marked as a most dangerous foreigner and dethroned from the high esteem in which he was held by the people, while the nobility would resent the insult shown to their class and possibly take steps to annul the marriage. The Senate would, in all probability, dismiss him from his place, no matter what the emergency for his services, for Brabantio was the most respected nobleman in Venice, beloved of the Duke and councillors, and of great influence in the state. And to Iago's knowledge, there was no absolute certainty of a war nor was it so imminent as it turned out immediately. There was Cassio on the spot to fill Othello's place in an emergency and the Senate regarded him as a man of superior merit and ability. No doubt, it burnt the

heart of the malicious machinator to think that aught should accrue to the advantage of this Florentine, but it could not be helped at present and he would square it up very soon. Just now, he must be content with the downfall of the deified warrior and the humiliation of the haughty damsel. He therefore hailed the happy news which his wife brought from Desdemona and congratulated the general on the good fortune which was going to fall to his lot in a few hours. Othello felt deeply indebted to his honest friend. He thanked him heartily for his loving services and admired his sagacity and perseverence.

Such is the history of the secret marriage which forms the base and beginning of this great tragedy and such the character and mutual relation of the persons whose life and fortune after that event we are granted to see. It is no dream of idle fancy, dear reader, what has just been revealed to you, but a true and vivid sketch of the subtle background upon which the tragic picture rises in relief and which the master-hand of the divine poet has done in the most delicate shades. The extent and detail of observation in this almost invisible region have perchance tired your imagination and taxed your confidence, but when you call to mind the puzzling problems and dilemmas which were pointed out at the commencement of this chapter, and interpret the feelings, motives and actions depicted in the tragedy in the light of those left out between the scenes and behind them, you will not only perceive the reality of the revelation, but, freed from the illusions and misapprehensions which have hitherto misled the best of Shakespearean scholars, understand the exact bearing of the incidents upon each other and realise the natural and inevitable working of the final result. For, fascinating as it is in its general effect, the picture

of this magnificent tragedy, without a clear and correct comprehension of its background, becomes defective in detail and discovers difficulties which destroy its very reality. Let us proceed to analyse and appreciate the beauty of this picture and return to the secret marriage at which we broke our narrative.

CHAPTER III

THE NIGHT OF THE MARRIAGE

I

THAT day the sun set too soon, and the no-moon night began its life too early, as it seemed to Desdemona. Her mind was full of fear and hesitation, though she had assented to Emilia's proposal and placed herself completely in her hands. She would have been glad if the night had never come. She trembled to think of doing aught that might go against her father's pride or pleasure, yet her heart melted with pity for Othello. Her judgment was dull with the conflict of thoughts and feelings. She could scarcely discern between hope and certainty, and relaxed into that passive condition which welcomes help and advice and follows the lead of any well-meaning friend, without question or resistance.

Where a family has been reduced to the unenviable simplicity which makes a widowed father the guide and guardian of an only daughter, it is hard to say which of the two is to be pitied most. At supper-time, Brabantio could not fail to mark the sickly pensiveness which sat on Desdemona's lovely countenance. "What is the matter with thee, child?" asked the uneasy parent; "aren't you feeling well?" "Nothing, father," readily answered the loving daughter, "I am all right." But she was not all right: she had been growing less and less cheerful for some days and the cause could not be guessed. The old man's anxiety was now at its highest, though he interrogated her no further, and

Desdemona could scarcely look him in the face. Another question from the kind father, and the helpless child would have been moved to tears, but they would both have been where they were without any mutual understanding. Brabantio feared this effect on the gentle girl and did not press his enquiry, while Desdemona felt too timid (albeit she inclined) to fall into her father's arms and make a clean confession of her trouble. Kind reader! blame not the father, nor the daughter—life does not always move with the guide of foresight and calculation, and a father can never supply the mother's place, especially to a grown-up daughter.

Brabantio retired to bed with a mind troubled by anxious thoughts on his daughter's account. How happy he should have felt if she had accepted the hand of her cousin Lodovico, and how happy she would be in life! But the girl had a will of her own, and strangely enough at one time seemed likely to show a preference to Roderigo of all the noble youths who sought her hand, though, when that young man was shut out by her father, she never complained but accepted the well-meant warning in a thankful spirit. How was it she remained quite "opposite to marriage"? What was the matter with her? Whom was she going to marry if she rejected all the noble lads of Venice? Was it possible that her childish fancy had been caught by the grandeur of the Moor? And was he making her any offers of love and sending any messages? She had told him once of a beautiful bouquet which he sent by Cassio, and another time, of some fruits which the same man brought from the general, but nothing more. Was she concealing aught from him? It was impossible for the good father to think it of his artless daughter, yet his mind was troubled not a little and he would plainly ask her about it the next day and put an end to all anxiety.

Who could say that even the smooth face and pleasant manners of the Florentine might not attract a girl, for girls, he knew, cared very little for rank and position when once they made up their minds? It would indeed create a shameful scandal if simple Desdemona showed favour to such a man—one, of low birth and rank, who, as rumour spoke, was so enamoured of his Veronese mistress that he was proposing to marry her! Was he going to give her up to marry the daughter of a Venetian senator? 'Heaven forbid!' exclaimed the old father, but the idea haunted him in his sleep and shadowed it with a dream.

Desdemona sat up in her room with a book before her, reading and thinking at intervals, yet little noting what she read and little sifting what she thought. Her kind father's anxious enquiry repeatedly pressed itself upon her mind—*What is the matter with thee, child? aren't you feeling well?* Why did she hide her trouble from her good father? and was it too late now for her to save herself from the situation—to excuse herself from the engagement of the night? She scarcely knew how to decide the question but found herself on the horns of a dilemma and felt ready to weep. Just then, the clock struck twelve, and almost involuntarily she blew out the candle and crept downstairs—and found herself face to face with Emilia and her good husband! The dilemma disappeared, and in an instant the richest damsel of Venice was on her way to the Sagittary where the Moor was eagerly awaiting her arrival and a priest was present to solemnise their secret marriage.

II

Iago was to keep pacing in front of Brabantio's mansion, watching it from a distance until Desdemona

returned from the Sagittary. That was the arrangement, but Iago had more important business to attend to. He had to square matters with Roderigo who had been freely expending money on presents to Desdemona whose hand he wished to secure. He had already waited long and was growing dissatisfied with the slow progress of his suit. Not quite a week since, when they met, he said it looked to him rather strange that the girl should be so ready to receive gifts, yet so slow to respond. "No doubt," said Iago, "she *is* a strange creature, and I've always had my fears, you know, she might not be worth the game. Well, there's no helping it. We are in, and must get to the end, by hook or by crook."

"I wish I could meet you oftener," said Roderigo who felt quite encouraged by his friend's words: "it is such a comfort to see you and hear you talk, news or no news."

"I should certainly meet you every day," replied the good friend, "but I'm worked to death with preparations for the war they expect. It 's the old story of the willing horse who must bear the burden while the fodder goes to the ass."

Roderigo forgot his own complaint and felt sympathy for his friend.

"I'm disgusted with this service," continued Iago: "ours is a state for fools and foreigners."

"Indeed, how they adore the Moor!" exclaimed the Venetian youth.

"Yes, adore him whom they ought to *hate!*" vociferated Iago. They ought to hang him, and that other scoundrel, his chosen lieutenant, the lusty dog of Florence. I detest them both equally."

It was not difficult for Roderigo to understand Iago's bitter hatred of the Moor. Within the last few days, strange revelations had come to light regarding the

general whom every one had hitherto thought pure and perfect in his private life. A few eyes had seen Emilia's secret visits to him and not a few tongues kept themselves busy in gossiping the scandal. The rumour was spreading apace, and Roderigo suspected it had reached the husband's ears. He therefore dropped the conversation about Othello and turned to the other foreigner. "Is it true," he asked, "the fellow is going to marry that wench of Verona?"

"The devil take them both!" ejaculated the good man. "It's time I am off. Goodbye!" and Iago went away in hot haste as if he was urgently waited for at his quarters. He was evidently moved, thought Roderigo.

It is clear Iago had not omitted either Cassio or his mistress from his books. His supersession by the Florentine only served to accentuate the jealousy he had already conceived against them both. Cassio was an able fellow and Bianca a pretty bird. They had lived together for two or three years and unlike a courtesan she loved him and doted on him and was as faithful to him as a wedded wife. A strumpet should be a strumpet, said the moralist, and he had not, amidst his many schemes, forgotten to set a missile in motion against her and her paramour. But it failed to hit them, for it did not succeed in showing up Cassio as an undesirable officer, neither did it induce him then (though afterwards it did) to think of leaving her company.

As soon as Emilia and Desdemona were off on their way to the Sagittary, Iago ran up to Roderigo and awoke him and hurried him to put on his coat and follow him at once.

"What's the matter?" asked the young aspirant, in all eagerness. "Has she sent for me?"

"Everything on the way. Quick! come along!" was the only reply of the honest friend.

On the way, Iago broke the startling news to the dupe. "The idiot has eloped with the Moor," said he, "and married him! She is at the Sagittary and went there, it appears, in the company of a common gondolier. She has sent word to my wife to go see her there."

"Who do you mean?" asked Roderigo, in a tone which did not conceal his alarm.

"Your demon—*Des-de-mona!*" answered Iago, as if in bitter vexation at the failure of his scheme.

"You are joking!" said Roderigo, stopping his friend by the hand: "Pray, do not torment me."

"Upon my soul, 'tis true," said Iago, in a serious voice: "the news has taken me quite by surprise, and my wife was simply stunned to hear it. But go along! let's wake up the father and do all we can—" And he resumed the walk dragging the dupe with him.

Roderigo, however, moved on unwillingly. The news was a revelation and blow to him. He had staked all his wealth on the event, sent gold and jewels to Desdemona, and many and many a time helped his friend with money—all to be told that he has clean lost the game, that the lady received his gifts but gave her hand to another! It was quite clear there was fraud in the transaction, and though he would not blame Iago, he could not believe that his wife who acted as the intermediary had not played the cheat. Where was the use of following his friend's lead any further? "Sure, there has been fraud and foul play," he muttered to himself, "and all my costly presents—oh—"

"You are a fool!" rebuked Iago, indignantly cutting short his complaint: "and I've been a fool, too, serving a fool."

Iago was however glad that he had anticipated the man's misgiving and given a pretty bracelet that evening to Emilia, telling her, "Put this on your dear

mistress's hand; let it be our wedding gift to her whose happiness is next our hearts"—and the simple wife was immensely pleased with the present she was going to give her beloved lady that night.

"I'm sure your wife knew it all," cried Roderigo after a minute's pause, unable to suppress his feelings: "I'm sure she was in it."

"Not a bit," said Iago, "it is all the doing of Cassio. My wife saw him oftentimes at the place, but she never suspected—"

"Never suspected!" unconsciously retorted the poor dupe who was put out by the explanation: "No, she never suspected—and I suppose, *was* never suspected,—but why blame any one and spread a scandal? I'm no scandal-monger. I'm a fool, an utter fool. Let me go home and repent my folly."

Iago's quick brain perceived a nasty revelation in this piteous cry, but he pretended not to notice it and resumed his explanation in a friendly tone. "I can guess how it came about," he said: "I knew long ago that Cassio was going from the Moor to Brabantio's, —on love-errands, as I now see—that was after the entertainment, and—"

"On *love*-errands! and *you* knew it!" interrupted Roderigo: "ah me! you too in it, Iago! you too!"

"Bless my soul! I never dreamt—"

"No, don't tell me you never knew it—

> "Never tell me; I take it much unkindly
> That thou, Iago, who hast had my purse
> As if the strings were thine, shouldst know of this—"

III

Roderigo would not hear his friend to the end, but assumed that, all along, he had been aware of Othello's suit to Desdemona, and the intended elopement and

marriage. Not Emilia alone but Iago too, he felt sure, had befriended the Moor in the intrigue, and the slight hope he still had that Iago might be sincere and honest, and might somehow help him after waking up Brabantio, was now gone. Hence, his piteous complaint charging his friend with unkindness and ingratitude. Iago interrupts him and protests against this hasty censure :

> " But you'll not hear me. If ever I did *dream*
> Of such a matter, *abhor* me."

Yes, if ever Iago dreamt that a love-intrigue was in progress—that this odd event was going to happen—Roderigo was at liberty to *abhor* him. This was certainly strong language, of a sincere friend, which should have put the sceptic at once in the mood for listening, and if he had listened, Iago would have narrated a complete story of Cassio's mediation, and restored the confidence of the dupe in the sincerity and honesty of both himself and his wife. But the poor man could not so easily give up his suspicion. He felt sure that his friend had cheated him and helped the general, and now it struck him that his hatred of the Moor (of which he had told him only the other day) was but a sham and pretence. And he said as much :

> " Thou told'st me thou didst hold him in thy hate !"

Another serious charge : but Iago takes it up, and with a strong re-assertion of his hatred—"*Despise* me, if I do not"—succeeds in throwing the victim into the listening vein. The charge has, however, suggested the surest means of re-establishing the trust which had been shaken. Iago should convince Roderigo of the reality of the hatred he bore to the Moor, and the genuineness of his friendship follows as a matter of course. So he abandons the account of Cassio's love-mission, with which he had thought of satisfying the

disappointed lover, and takes up the thread of his own disaffection to the general; and he spins it out in such an artful manner that all doubt is at once set at rest and a sympathetic animosity implanted in the heart of the simpleton.

Iago's hatred of the Moor was indeed real. Its origin we have seen, and it was undoubtedly accentuated by his supersession in the lieutenant's post. But the story about the cap-in-hand "personal suit" which "three great ones of the city" made to the Moor on his behalf, and the "bombast circumstance" with which the haughty general, "as loving his own pride and purposes" evaded them, is a fabrication of his brain, given out for the first time, without the least fear of verification; as also the sneering and deprecating account of Cassio the Florentine. This tissue of truth and falsehood, so cleverly and readily interwoven and so beautifully spread out, serves its purpose most admirably. It charms the listener to listen with interest, it keeps him following at a brisk pace, it impresses him with the gravity and bitterness of the grievance—the supersession of a man of proved ability and experience by a junior in service, of small ability and slender experience: compassed by the Moor to serve "his own purposes." If Roderigo had wished to be enlightened on these purposes, he would have been told the story of the love-intrigue which the Moor had evidently been managing through Cassio when he chose him as his lieutenant. But the credulous man was so fully carried away by the graphic description of the grievance that he cared little for details. Before the speech is concluded, we see that he sympathises with his friend and hates the Moor! And when Iago tells him that while the "debitor-and-creditor," the "counter-caster" Cassio is to be the general's lieutenant, he must be content to be—

"God bless the mark!—his Moorship's ancient," the simple dupe makes no secret of his feelings:

> "By heaven, I rather would have been his hangman."

Roderigo is completely reconciled to Iago. A common bond has been established between them. Iago hates the Moor for his denying him the lieutenant's place; Roderigo hates him for his depriving him of the prize he coveted, and his hatred is so deep that sooner than be the Moor's ancient he "would have been his hangman!"

There is no remedy, says Iago, for preferment goes not by the good old rule of seniority in service, but "by letter and affection," suggesting of course that Cassio's promotion was due to the interest and recommendation of Desdemona. Roderigo, however, fails to perceive this and says nothing which might lead up to the story about Cassio's mediation. So, Iago is content to close his speech with an appeal about his own sincerity:

> "Now, sir, be judge yourself,
> Whether I in any just term am affin'd
> To love the Moor."

The dupe is forced into a silent admission that he had been hasty in suspecting the honesty of his good friend. But why does he still serve under a general who has done him such sheer injustice? The answer is ready and it is well spun out to last till they reach the residence of Brabantio. Iago plainly confesses that he follows the Moor as his ancient, not "for love and duty" but simply "to serve his turn upon him." He assures his simple friend that he is no "duteous and knee-crooking knave," content to serve for "nought but provender"—no! he is a fellow with "some soul," trimming himself "in forms and visages of duty" to achieve his own "peculiar end." And Roderigo may count upon his successful dissimulation, for he says:

> "when my outward action doth demonstrate
> The native act and figure of my heart
> In compliment extern, 'tis not long after
> But I will wear my heart upon my sleeve
> For daws to peck at; I am not what I am."

It does not strike the fool that a dissimulator might be a dangerous man for him to deal with. They have now approached Brabantio's house, and Roderigo's heart almost collapses at the bare thought of the good fortune he has missed, which an unworthy rival has carried away so easily. He cannot help exclaiming—

> "What a full fortune does the thick-lips owe,
> If he can carry't thus!"

IV

To the worst-minded man, it is but poor comfort to spoil another's happiness which he has failed to secure for himself, even though the other might be a most undeserving individual. Yet the good friend prescribes no better course to Roderigo:

> "Call up her father,
> Rouse him; make after him, poison his delight,
> Proclaim him in the streets; incense her kinsmen,
> And though he in a fertile climate dwell,
> Plague him with flies: though that his joy be joy,
> Yet throw such chances of vexation on't,
> As it may lose some colour."

Roderigo is quite ready to call up the father and break the sad news to him, and he does it like a gentleman. Iago, however, is not satisfied with his manner. He assumes a false voice and sounds a "terrible summons," with a "timorous accent and dire yell," and in the most filthy language tells the old senator who appears above at a window, that he has been "robb'd," deprived of "half his soul,"—that his daughter has run away with the Moor.

It was a dark night—the night of the new-moon day, as we shall see—and Brabantio could not make out who it was that shouted so loudly. He thought it was some drunken wretch and asked—"What, have you lost your wits?" The alarm did not however fail to send a shock through his soul, for it awoke him from a dream which witnessed the marriage of his daughter with Cassio!

Fool as he is, Roderigo grasps the situation. Iago spoke in a feigned voice and his vulgarity spoiled the credibility of his report. The ancient was evidently afraid to speak in his own voice. He was a small man and servant of the state, and might not venture to wake up a senator and tell him scandal about his own daughter, or as the villain himself put it afterwards, it might be neither meet nor "wholesome" to his place to report against, or be produced against, the Moor under whom he should "for necessity of present life" continue to serve. Roderigo has nothing of the kind to fear and is ready to reveal himself, and he does reveal himself immediately. He addresses the senator in the most respectful style, and of course in his own natural voice:

"Most reverend signior, do you know my voice?"

The feigned voice of Iago had misled the old gentleman, but his own ought to command respect and attention. Brabantio, indeed, might have recognized Roderigo's voice, for he had known him only too well as the obstinate lover of Desdemona; but he could not believe that the young nobleman would speak such foul words as had been addressed to him, and therefore answers—"Not I; what are you?"

The gallant reveals himself: "My name is Roderigo." Yes, it is Roderigo; Brabantio has no more doubt about it, and he can only think that the excluded lover, losing his wits with a surfeit of supper and wine, has

come to disturb his rest by this foul and false alarm. The old father draws a breath of relief and reproaches the foolish youngster:

> "I have charg'd thee not to haunt about my doors.
> In honest plainness thou hast heard me say
> My daughter is not for thee; and now, in madness,
> Being full of supper and distempering draughts,
> Upon malicious knavery dost thou come
> To start my quiet."

And he warns him further—

> "But thou must needs be sure
> My spirit and my place have in them power
> To make this bitter to thee."

It was absurd to tell the senator of his being robbed—it was Venice and his house was not a grange. Evidently, Brabantio thought that the hubbub was all made by one man—Roderigo—though, as a matter of fact, it was not he but Iago (in his feigned voice) who had alarmed the senator of thieves and robbery.

Roderigo attempts to get the senator to listen to him:

> "Most grave Brabantio,
> In simple and pure soul I come to you."

Iago, however, is impatient. It will not do to break the news slowly and politely, for Desdemona might meanwhile return from the Sagittary. So he discharges another volley of obscene expressions at the senator (of course in a feigned voice), renewing the alarm about his daughter's running away with the Moor.

Brabantio now becomes aware that there are two persons on the spot. He is unable to recognise the "profane wretch" who has just spoken, but evidently he is some vulgar ruffian whom Roderigo has brought to aid him in the wicked announcement, and he therefore holds the young nobleman responsible for the whole disturbance:

"This thou shalt answer; I know thee, Roderigo."

Roderigo rises equal to the occasion and makes a remarkable speech, which shows that he is, as Coleridge has pointed out, "not without the moral notions and sympathies with honour which his rank and connections had hung upon him."

"Sir, I will answer any thing. But, I beseech you,
If 't be your pleasure and most wise consent,
(As partly I find it is), that your fair daughter,
At this odd-even and dull watch o' the night,
Transported with no worse nor better guard
But with a knave of common hire, a gondolier,
To the gross clasps of a lascivious Moor,—
If this be known to you and your allowance,
We then have done you bold and saucy wrongs;
But if you know not this, my manners tell me
We have your wrong rebuke. Do not believe
That, from the sense of all civility,
I thus would play and trifle with your reverence:
Your daughter, if you have not given her leave,
I say again, hath made a gross revolt;
Tying her duty, beauty, wit, and fortunes
In an extravagant and wheeling stranger
Of here and everywhere. Straight satisfy yourself:
If she be in her chamber or your house,
Let loose on me the justice of the state
For thus deluding you."

Roderigo has certainly "fallen head over heels in love with the great beauty of Venice," but it is a mistake to suppose that his love is a mere "pursuit," that Desdemona does not "so much as know of his existence," that he got only "as far as the father" but to be "warned off the premises as one not fit to pay addresses to Brabantio's daughter," and that the shock of her elopement which he announces, "throws him for a time into the arms of Brabantio, but only on the principle that misfortune makes strange bed-fellows."* Neither is it true that he is "one of the 'curled darlings'

* Moulton's *Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist*, p. 228.

whom Desdemona has rejected" and "Brabantio, doubtless at his daughter's request, has forbidden him his house." * As we have already seen, Roderigo's suit did receive some encouragement from Desdemona, and the simple girl might have granted it but for her father's admonition. It is therefore natural that the young lover should feel aggrieved by this interference of the old man, and should strive to attain his end in spite of it; and being the sole master of his estate, he stakes it all on this one object of his life. And it must be said to his credit that his love is quite honourable and continues such notwithstanding the vile and vulgar suggestions of his wicked friend, though his character is ruined by the moral code of his companion and he eventually consents to commit a murder to compass his aim. It is doubtful if Roderigo would have persisted in his suit had Desdemona discarded him at the very outset as she had done her other wooers; doubtful, too, if he would have followed his friend to the wars had he not already staked the greater portion of his wealth on a wild-goose chase and it was too late for him to give it up. It now came upon him as a most painful and inexplicable surprise that the elopement he had been planning and paying for, should actually have been effected by another, a Moor—a foreigner without any fixed abode, a mere soldier of fortune whom no girl of any respectable family in Venice would have dreamt of marrying. "Perhaps, the event is, to me, a blessing in disguise," thought the poor aspirant. For he felt sure that Brabantio would not approve the marriage but would get it annulled, and it seemed the very next step that his own suit should be welcomed by the hitherto unwilling father. So he awakes him and communicates the strange news in the most confident and respectful tone, not

* Boas: *Shakespeare and His Predecessors,* p. 428.

indeed in pursuance of his friend's advice to "poison" the Moor's delight, to "plague him with flies," or to "throw such chances of vexation" on his joy "as it may lose some colour," but in the hope of securing an advantage to himself—in the belief that it might lead to the fulfilment of his long-cherished desire.

Brabantio receives Roderigo's announcement with suspended breath. His doubt is at an end. The hope that it might be a false alarm by some drunken knave was gone. The news was "not unlike" his dream, and belief of it began to oppress him already. He calls for a light and runs to Desdemona's chamber, but oh, she is not there! What a thunderbolt on the poor parent! He feels perplexed and confused, and proceeds to don his dress all in a hurry, to go out in search of his dear daughter.

Meanwhile, Iago parts company from Roderigo, for, as he explains, it will not only be awkward but dangerous for him, an ancient, to figure as a witness against his general, under whom he should continue to serve; and the state, it should be remembered, could not afford to cast off the Moor at that critical time when

"he's embark'd
With such loud reason to the Cyprus wars,
(Which even now stand in act), that, for their souls,
Another of his fathom they have none,
To lead their business."

This is of course what Iago told his dupe to excuse himself, but he really believed that the Moor had done a defiant deed which might cost him his generalship, and believed, too, that the war was neither so certain nor so imminent as, to his great surprise, it turned out all of a sudden that very night, at that very hour. It suited him to misrepresent matters and even to praise the Moor, and he did it to get away. Nor did Roderigo

misunderstand his friend's departure, for he had already guessed the reason for the feigned voice in which he spoke to Brabantio. Everything now depended on the prompt action the senator might take against the daring offender, and Roderigo knew whither to lead "the raisèd search" (his friend had not omitted to remind him it was to the Sagittary).

V

Iago spoke no more than the bare truth when he told Brabantio—

"Your heart is burst, you have lost half your soul."

Too truly does the strange news impart a death-shock to the old father, and if his life holds on for a time, it is simply by the strong support which hope ever affords it at the final stage. Not quite three hours since, he saw the lovely from of his dear child and heard the accents of her sweet voice, and his misgivings have come true already and worse than he feared, his bad dream has been fulfilled worse than itself. It made the poor man reel with doubt, and fancy that he was dreaming in a dream, but the stern reality soon forced itself on his senses—tapers and torches, servants and followers, all and himself in the street. Alas!

"It is too true an evil: gone she is."

She was not within sight nor within hearing and possibly has been taken away never to be seen more. His soul utters a most piteous cry—

"And what's to come of my despisèd time
Is nought but bitterness."

The bitterness becomes doubly, trebly bitter when he thinks of the unhappiness he apprehends for his darling child. It is all a puzzle to him, a mystery, a strange

truth, a painful revelation and humiliation. That the gentle girl, who had remained quite opposite to marriage should have left home at midnight and gone out to marry the Moor, that she should not have whispered a word about it to him, her dear old father, not even when, but a short while since, at supper, he felt anxious on her account and wished to know what the matter was with her—oh, how could he help thinking that she had deceived him, yet how could he believe it of his good child, innocent Desdemona? However that might be, there was still a ray of hope left in the situation. "Are they married, think you?" asks the anxious father, and the reply he receives extinguishes the ray—"Truly, I think they are." Why has heaven mercilessly chosen old Brabantio, of all men, as the object of its wrath? That his own flesh and blood should rebel against him, and desert him, and bring disgrace on his head!—he could only exclaim, in a tone of utter depression:

> "Fathers, from hence trust not your daughters' minds
> By what you see them act."

For a moment, the father is alienated from his child, but the parental instinct returns immediately and furnishes a solution for the puzzle. Did the Moor work on the simple girl with foul charms "by which the property of youth and maidhood may be abused?" Roderigo, too, has heard of such things and Brabantio's surmise becomes a certainty. His fluttering heart beats steadily. He recovers his spirit and burns with rage against the treacherous Moor. The course is clear. Othello should be arrested at once and punished for his crime and Desdemona brought back to her home. Are they within easy reach?

> "Do you know
> Where we may apprehend her and the Moor?"

The young man whom he had spurned and warned off

his premises, now proves his saviour and gives a ready assurance:

> "I think I can discover him, if you please
> To get good guard and go along with me."

Certainly, it is no easy matter to arrest a commanding officer. Weapons are ordered, special officers of night are roused; kinsmen and neighbours, all muster strong and proceed to the Sagittary under the lead of "good Roderigo." Brabantio has already begun to feel he had been hard on this young man and he makes no secret of the feeling:

> "Oh, would you had had her!"

'Would I had allowed you to marry her!' But *did* she ever consent to marry him? Yes, Desdemona *had* inclined to marry Roderigo, but Brabantio interfered—unwisely as it has turned out—and he now regrets his rejection, though other suitors whom the girl would not appreciate were better and worthier of her hand. He will, however, make amends for it presently, and prove grateful to the youth; and he says from the bottom of his heart and in the fulness of sincere content—

> "On, good Roderigo; I'll deserve your pains."

But contentment and wisdom seldom grant their help before it is too late.

VI

Thus far, Iago's plans have succeeded quite in accordance with his calculations. He has brought about a secret marriage between the Moorish commander of Venice and the daughter of a wealthy senator. He has squared matters with Roderigo whom he had been fleecing of money and jewels, and got him to rouse and start the injured father in pursuit of the daring offender.

And having thus made it impossible for the damsel to return home in secrecy, he has run up to the Sagittary, as the friend of Othello, to apprise him of the awkward and unexpected turn events had taken in that short while. In his inmost heart, he congratulated himself on the fine fun that was to follow, but even he, as we shall see, cannot escape disappointment, and must change his plans according to circumstances which he could little foresee or control.

The marriage was just over at the Sagittary and the couple would have retired to spend a happy half-hour if they had not been alarmed by a knock at the door and a breathless cry which accompanied it—"General! General!" It was Iago's voice. Something untoward has occurred and he has brought news of it. The hearts of the inmates sank to their lowest depths with that blow of the unspoken message. Emilia hugged her mistress to her bosom while Othello opened the door and went out to learn the tidings.

Iago was not long in communicating the startling intelligence to his general. Brabantio was going there with a large band of followers. Roderigo had somehow watched the movements of Desdemona and called at her father's place soon after she left it, and yelled out fiercely and roused the old man from his sleep. He told him that his daughter had run away with a black devil, a Barbary horse, a lascivious Moor, a homeless wanderer, a penniless pauper of low birth and breeding. Indeed, he "prated and spoke such scurvy and provoking terms" against the general, that, with his "little godliness," Iago "did full hard forbear him." "Nine or ten times" he had "thought to have yerked him" under the ribs; but unfortunately he could not bring himself to do any "contriv'd murder"—he held it "very stuff o' the conscience"—and he "lacked iniquity

sometimes to do him service." Othello appreciates the devotion of his ancient and is glad that he had let Roderigo alone. " 'Tis better as it is," says the general, cool and collected and quite prepared to face the situation in perfect obedience to law and authority. Iago is anxious to know if the Moor has been "fast married" and is full of solicitude for the safety of the friend with whom he has identified himself:

> "Be assur'd of this,
> That the magnifico is much belov'd,
> And hath in his effect a voice potential
> As double as the duke's; he will divorce you,
> Or put upon you what restraint and grievance
> The law, with all his might to enforce it on,
> Will give him cable."

Iago volunteered this prediction by way of precaution, that the general might be impressed with the sincerity of his friend, and he spoke the truth; for, indeed, he believed that Brabantio's powerful voice would nullify the marriage of his daughter, contracted without his consent and with a Moor, and would further subject Othello to grievous punishment for having seduced her. He knew nothing, of course,—nor Othello either—about the charge of charms and spells on which Brabantio was going to effect the arrest.

Othello is not frightened in the least by the forecast of his friend. Conscious of his high position and the value of the services he had rendered (and of course was prepared to render) to the signiory, which, he feels sure, would out-tongue the complaints of the father, he is not less alive to his own royal descent (yet to be revealed), nor to the pure and perfect heart he carried. He did not marry Desdemona to advance his rank or to reach a fortune (his own was quite a proud heritage, though he did not wear a bonnet and proclaim it like the Venetian noblemen) and he would not "for the sea's worth"

have put his "unhoused free condition" into "circumspection and confine" but that he *loved* the gentle damsel. And he is no coward to conceal himself at the sight of a party coming in search of him.

> "*Iago.* These are the raisèd father and his friends;
> You were best go in.
> *Oth.* Not I; I must be found:
> My parts, my title, and my perfect soul
> Shall manifest me rightly. Is it they?"

They turn out, however, to be not Brabantio's party but Cassio and officers who have come in search of the general. The duke required his "haste-post-haste appearance" on account of some urgent message received from Cyprus. The galleys had sent "a dozen sequent messengers" that very night "at one another's heels" and a midnight council was summoned and the general was required at once to present himself before it. As soon as Othello is informed of this, he goes in to Desdemona to "spend a word" with her and returns immediately: and just as they set out for the Duke's, a body of men with torches and weapons approach them. It is Brabantio and his followers whom good Roderigo has conducted to the Sagittary. Brabantio has evidently convinced himself that Othello had carried away Desdemona by practising on her "with foul charms," abusing "her delicate youth with drugs or minerals that weaken motion." The more he thought of it, the more it looked "probable and palpable to thinking" that the Moor had "enchanted" the simple girl; for it was impossible (he says it to Othello's very face) that

> "a maid so tender, fair, and happy,
> So opposite to marriage that she shunn'd
> The wealthy curlèd darlings of our nation
> Would ever have, to incur a general mock,
> Run from her guardage to the sooty bosom
> Of such a thing as thou,—to fear, not to delight."

He should therefore arrest him and bring him to trial and recover Desdemona, and he comes up with followers and officers, all with drawn swords. Othello's men note the danger and meet them, likewise with drawn swords. Iago, ever ready to risk his life in behalf of his general, singles out Roderigo and challenges him!

> "You, Roderigo! come, sir, I am for you."

Indeed he had entreated the Moor to "be advis'd," for Brabantio was coming "to bad intent." But Othello needs nobody's counsel. He stands between the two parties, peremptorily commands both to "keep up" their bright swords, and tells the good signior that he should "more command with years" than with weapons. The tumult terminates; and Brabantio, burning with rage against the man who has stolen his beloved daughter, can scarcely address him in a tone of respect; and the very first question he asks reveals his wrath:

> "Oh, thou foul thief, where hast thou stow'd my daughter?"

If the poor father could have known at the moment that he was within an arm's length of his beloved child, his heart might have found instant relief: he might have been content to take her home, and things might have taken a different course altogether. But he believed that the wicked man had secured her in some secret place and would not restore her to him except under rigorous coercion. He accordingly charges him as "a practiser of arts inhibited and out of warrant" and in his capacity as 'Justice of the Peace' directs the immediate arrest of the criminal, with a view to commit him to prison till the time of trial.

Othello, however, is as calm as Brabantio is enraged; and with the most perfect self-restraint, unmoved by the insulting words addressed to him, and unshaken in his dignity, self-respect and self-confidence, he bows

to the mandate of the senator and is ready to go to gaol; but he asks—

> "How may the duke be therewith satisfied,
> Whose messengers are here about my side,
> Upon some present business of the state,
> To bring me to him?"

One of the officers present confirms this and informs the worthy signior that the Duke summoned a midnight meeting of the council and sent word to the senators. Evidently, the call went to Brabantio's after he left home. The old man was somewhat puzzled by the news, for he guessed that some urgent message had arrived from Cyprus and felt it rather odd to have to prosecute the general at that critical time. But his crime was one which could not be passed over whatever the necessity for his services:

> "Mine's not an idle cause: the duke himself,
> Or any of my brothers of the state,
> Cannot but feel this wrong as 'twere their own;
> For if such actions may have passage free,
> Bond-slaves and pagans shall our statesmen be."

So he orders the prisoner to be brought away for immediate trial and proceeds to the Duke's. He has little doubt about getting back his daughter, at all events, though the Moor might escape punishment and be let off with a mere "check" owing to the emergency. Othello himself is glad at heart, for he has achieved his object and has no graver charge to refute than the ridiculous one of having won his bride by charms and spells. Roderigo's hope is revived, while his friend is not a little perplexed by the unexpected turn of events, which, with all his foresight, he could not calculate. Is his project going to fail, and has he made a fool of himself? The thought made him quite uneasy, but it did not discourage him nor deprive him of his wits.

He should watch the course of events and adjust his plans accordingly.

But how fares the gentle Desdemona inside the Sagittary? Iago's sudden alarm at the door, we have already seen, was quite a blow to the tender damsel, and she might have swooned but for the encouraging presence and words of good Emilia. It was clear that her sin of concealment had met with a most quick and inconvenient discovery, and she could not return home without—and it was all fear and confusion in her mind when she thought of it. Oh, why did she bring herself to such a pass? and what misinterpretation might not be put upon her sudden and secret disappearance from her home? But she had committed no sin and had no reason to be ashamed of herself. She would beseech her kind father to forgive her, and it was perhaps best for everybody that the time for revelation and explanation had come sooner than was wished or expected. When Othello went in from Iago, he told Desdemona that her father was on his way to the place, but it should not frighten her, for her course was clear; and he had himself to go to the Duke who required his "haste-post-haste appearance" on account of some sudden news which had arrived from Cyprus. Desdemona should stay at the Sagittary with Emilia, and he would be back as quickly as possible. But hardly had he stepped out than the noise of a great tumult and commotion in the street alarmed the girl again, and she fell down speechless and shivering, and could only beckon to her maid to go to the window and learn the particulars of the trouble.

VII

When Brabantio entered the council-chamber with Othello and others, the Duke and senators were busy

discussing the disquieting news they had received about a strong Turkish fleet sailing against Cyprus. Galley upon galley had arrived that night, bringing news of the different stages of its movements. Montano, the governor in charge of the island was a capable man, "of most allowed sufficiency," but the "fortitude of the place" was best known to Othello and "opinion, a sovereign mistress of effects" threw a safer voice on him, and he had accordingly been sent for, and when he could not be found at his lodging, "three several quests" had been sent about to search him out. The Duke was therefore extremely glad to note his arrival and made no delay in telling him:

> "Valiant Othello, we must straight employ you
> Against the general enemy Ottoman."

Turning round, he saw and greeted Brabantio whose arrival he had not noticed:

> "Welcome, gentle signior;
> We lack'd your counsel and your help to-night."

Brabantio's reply came as a surprise both on the Duke and the senators:

> "So did I yours. Good your grace, pardon me;
> Neither my place, nor aught I heard of business
> Hath rais'd me from my bed, nor doth the general care
> Take hold on me, for my particular grief
> Is of so flood-gate and o'erbearing nature
> That it engluts and swallows other sorrows
> And it is still itself."

Indeed, it was a night of surprises—surprises to many persons and in more ways than one. Brabantio's grief for the flight of his daughter had changed into rage against Othello. At first a mere passing thought, it soon acquired the strength of belief in the old man's mind that the Moor had taken away his daughter by charms and spells, and he not only felt certain of re-

covering her but of subjecting the daring offender to punishment, notwithstanding his position and fame. This certainty, as we have seen, sustained a rude shake when, near the Sagittary, he learnt that the Duke had summoned a midnight meeting of the Senate and sent for the general. Had any news been received about the Turkish trouble and was he going to lodge his complaint against Othello when his services were most in requisition? This thought tormented the senator, again and again, on his way to the Duke's, and while he felt a superstitious dread of bad time having overtaken him, he trusted that his fellow-councillors and the Duke would feel the wrong "as 'twere their own" and deal with it without reference to any present necessity for the wrong-doer's services. It is easy to imagine the shock that passed through the old man's soul, when, immediately on his taking his seat, the very first words which fell in his ears were those of the Duke, telling Othello that he should straightway be employed against the Turks. No wonder that Brabantio's grief returned with all its force and he could barely mention it, and when asked what the matter was, his only reply was a cry—

> "My daughter! Oh, my daughter!"

"Dead?" ask the startled senators and the Duke, in one voice. They knew Desdemona (the Duke was familiar even with her name) and loved her both as the dear damsel she was and as the only child of good Brabantio. The kind tone of this sympathetic enquiry enables the aggrieved father to articulate his reply:

> "Ay, to me;
> She is abus'd, stol'n from me, and corrupted
> By spells and medicines bought of mountebanks;
> For nature so preposterously to err,
> Being not deficient, blind, or lame of sense,
> Sans witchcraft could not."

Certainly, a most unbearable blow. The Duke entertains so great a respect and regard for the good old senator, whose counsel has always been of high value to the state, that he puts by the pressing business on hand and proceeds to inquire into his personal grievance, giving out, at the very outset, a most kind and encouraging assurance:

"Whoe'er he be that in this foul proceeding
Hath thus beguil'd your daughter of herself
And you of her, the bloody book of law
You shall yourself read in the bitter letter
After your own sense; yea, though our proper son
Stood in your action."

Little did the Duke or the senators expect the Moor to be pointed to as the culprit complained against; and and when he was, they could only utter an instantaneous ejaculation—"We are very sorry for it." Yes, to be sure, it was most deplorable that the general, whom they looked to as the indispensable leader of the Venetian troops to the impending war, should get involved in a grave crime against a most respected and worthy senator. But they had as yet heard only one side. They should hear what Othello had to say in his defence, and here was some hope of the situation being saved.

Othello had no doubt hoped that the scheme of his secret wedding would be got through without any *contretemps,* and was somewhat vexed in his heart when he learnt that Brabantio had been roused from his sleep and was going in pursuit of him. He was however agreeably surprised to find that he had no worse charge to answer than that he had taken away the senator's daughter by charms and spells. This looked to him a most absurd accusation and he was prepared not only to lose his office but to let the sentence fall even on his life, should he be found guilty, for he knew that Desdemona would herself bear witness to his honourable

conduct. He speaks before the council with perfect calmness and the air of a proud victor, yet with becoming modesty:

> "Most potent, grave, and reverend signiors,
> My very noble and approv'd good masters,
> That I have ta'en away this old man's daughter,
> It is most true; true, I have married her.
> The very head and front of my offending
> Hath this extent, no more."

And he craves a patient hearing of the "round unvarnish'd tale" he would deliver of his "whole course of love," in his own rude speech and style (for he was not "bless'd with the soft phrase of peace," having spent his life until then in the "tented field"), and the Council could judge from it "what drugs, what charms, what conjuration, and what mighty magic" he had employed to win the complainant's daughter.

Brabantio, however, is impatient and would not so much as permit a denial of his charge. It is absurd to think that a gentle maiden of Desdemona's birth and breeding, would, "in spite of nature, of years, of country, credit, every thing," choose "to fall in love with what she fear'd to look on!" and, undoubtedly,

> "It is a judgment maim'd and most imperfect
> That will confess perfection so could err
> Against all rules of nature."

And he therefore vouches again, with double force,

> "That with some mixtures powerful o'er the blood,
> Or with some dram conjur'd to this effect,
> He wrought upon her."

The Duke, with the authority and impartiality of a judge, tells Brabantio that

> "To vouch this, is no proof,
> Without more wider and more overt test
> Than these thin habits and poor likelihoods
> Of modern seeming do prefer against him."

There is no *primâ facie* case made out against the Moor, for mere assertion is no argument. And the first senator likewise finding it quite incredible that a man of Othello's position, honour, and character would have stooped to employ any foul means to win his bride, puts him a leading question:

> "Did you bý indirect and forcèd courses
> Subdue and poison this young maid's affections?
> Or came it by request, and such fair question
> As soul to soul affordeth?"

The answer is indeed suggested; but Othello sees that the best proof of his innocence would be the testimony of Desdemona and prays that she may be sent for. Iago is accordingly despatched with attendants to fetch her, and, meanwhile, the accused proceeds to "present" how he throve in the "fair lady's love" and she in his.

Othello is no orator, but the noble sincerity of his conduct imparts both dignity and eloquence to his speech, and short and simple as it is, the narrative of his course of love carries conviction to all present. The Duke feels (and he says as much) that his own daughter might have been won quite as easily as Desdemona by the Moor's story of his travels and adventures. It is clear that he won the young maid by no foul or unfair means, and Brabantio must take up the "mangled matter at the best," for

> "Men do their broken weapons rather use
> Than their bare hands."

There is no undoing what has been done, and he must reconcile himself to his son-in-law and daughter, rather than discard them and make himself miserable. This is the friendly counsel and consolation the Duke extends to the senator immediately after hearing Othello; but the father shakes his head, for it impossible for him to believe that gentle Desdemona, who remained quite

"opposite to marriage," could ever have acted the forward girl and wooed any one—the Moor, of all men. And he prays that his daughter may be heard; and, feeling sure she will tell a different tale, says:

> "If she confess that she was half the wooer,
> Destruction on my head, if my bad blame
> Light on the man!"

But alas, it is destined to "light" on the woman, and she is his own darling daughter; and his destruction is a conclusion which his inevitable.

VIII

It is a sad mistake to suppose that Brabantio was an indifferent or unfeeling father; that, absorbed in the business of the state, he had paid little attention to the bringing up of his daughter; that the bond between him and his child was one, not of love, but of command and obedience; that no sooner had the girl discovered the man to whom she could cling with affection than she found it no hard matter to break away from her parent, and when her self-asssertion became settled, the proud, irascible father cut her off with a most heartless curse. Proud and irascible Brabantio undoubtedly was, but it impossible to conceive a kinder father nor one who could feel a greater concern for the happiness of his child. Even Iago knew that Desdemona's flight was to the old man the loss of "half" his soul, but in truth it was the loss of his whole soul and soon proved "mortal to him." It is likewise true there cannot be a more loving and unselfish daughter than Desdemona. Both father and child are types of parental and filial affection, but fate and circumstances conspire to create a mutual misunderstanding of their minds, and the father's heart is broken even by the

tender appeal which the timid daughter addresses to him in a most critical and unenviable situation.

As soon as Brabantio and his followers moved away from the Sagittary, with Othello and others, Emilia ran back to her mistress and was frightened to find her still lying in a senseless condition. A handful of cold water, however, revived her very soon, and Emilia told her all she had been able to learn of the disturbance in the street. Desdemona felt puzzled in the extreme. It was plain she had taken a most hasty, ill-advised and unfortunate step, but she would blame nobody, neither would she sit and weep like one past hope and help. She had read of heroes and heroines, and the time came for her to cast off her timidity and assume courage. That was the only course which could save the Moor who had been conducted to the Duke's, at that midnight hour, for instant trial, as Emilia told her, on a most serious charge. It was indeed ominous that trouble should have befallen her at the very threshold of married life, but such trouble, she knew, often led to happiness, and she fully believed that a time of joy and bliss was near at hand. She should proceed at once to the Duke's and secure the acquittal of the Moor by declaring him to be of her own free choice. Her father's wrath would then change into kindness and though he was evidently against the match, yet if she appealed to him in the sacred name of her dear mother (who to him, as to her, was the type of duty and affection), he was sure to vouchsafe his consent and blessing. So thought the simple girl, and Emilia, too, was of the same opinion and exhorted her to be bold, and said that everything happened for good. Both maid and mistress accordingly set out from the Sagittary, in the company of an attendant, and were within a stone's throw of the Duke's when Iago's party met them.

"Are you going for me?" asked Desdemona in a tone of great anxiety.

"Yes," answered Iago, and before the ancient could say another word to her, she darted off and wended her way into the council-chamber. And she was going towards Othello, to stand by his side, a co-offender and suppliant for her father's benediction, when the old man's command arrested her and she drew near him:

> "Come hither, gentle mistress;
> Do you perceive in all this noble company
> Where most you owe obedience?"

Even as Brabantio challenged the Duke to suspend his judgment until he heard his daughter's tale, Desdemona made her appearance and was proceeding to Othello's side, under the influence of his magic spell as it seemed to the father: and the only thing he could think of to restore her to herself was the watchword of 'obedience' which, he knew, was ever strong with her, stronger than any charm or spell; for as we have already seen, she loved him and adored him and delighted in obeying him as her mother had done. And he was glad to note that the watchword did not fail now, for the gentle girl at once turned to him and approached him with a beseeching look—but alas, only to confound him beyond all hope of recovery, by the simple yet strange appeal she addressed to him in the hope of reconciling him to her choice:

> "My noble father,
> I do perceive here a divided duty:
> To you I am bound for life and education;
> My life and education both do learn me
> How to respect you; you are the lord of duty;
> I am hitherto your daughter; but here's my husband,
> And so much duty as my mother show'd
> To you, preferring you before her father,
> So much I challenge that I may profess
> Due to the Moor my lord."

Who that knew the trouble in Desdemona's heart could misunderstand the import of her speech? Yet, how easily it upset a most affectionate parent and struck him with grief which was never to be soothed on this side of the grave! Alas, how little of the real drama of daily life the actors are permitted to see or to know! and how insufficient for life's easy course and conduct, nay often misleading, the scenes they are admitted to see, the facts they are allowed to know! We are as little in the confidence of the life without us as of the life within, though to both we are chained by cause and consequence and must needs pay dear alike for misdeeds and mistakes born of ignorance.

To Brabantio, from whose knowledge a whole chapter of his daughter's life had been shut out, her sudden disappearance and marriage with the Moor were only intelligible as the effect of witchcraft—of "spells and medicines bought of mountebanks;" for he knew her gentle and retiring disposition, her love and obedience to him, and the regard she entertained for his feelings and happiness. But the plain words she addressed to him in the presence of the Duke and senators made it quite clear that the witchcraft, if any, was in his own dream and delusion regarding her character. Was this the child for whose sake he was living and on whom he had centred his whole soul? this the daughter of whom he was feeling proud as the sole heir to his rich possessions? this the good, innocent girl who had remained "opposite to marriage" and rejected the rich youths of Venice! Sure, he has been deceived. His misgivings have proved real. The Moor has told the truth and she was, beyond all question, more than "half the wooer." What a strange revelation! That she who appeared "perfection" in his eyes should have fallen in love with a black Moor, "in spite of nature, of years,

of country, credit, every thing"—that she should have acted the meek, modest, guileless girl at home and kept him in the dark about her choice—that she should now assume a bold and defiant tone towards him—oh, perversity! oh, mighty mockery! oh, treason of the blood! oh, shame! who would be father to such a girl! The old man's heart was rent with grief and distress and disappointment, all in a second. That the sweet, lovely angel whom he had so long brought up with the tenderest care and affection should now bring him this bitter experience, that she should act and speak unfilially—this was enough to kill the loving father. She had forsaken him and was dead to him, and he should be done with her and forget her:

> "God be wi' you! I have done.—
> Please it your grace, on to the state affairs:
> I had rather to adopt a child than get it."

But it is no easy matter to cut off a tendril from one's own heart, to tear a tender creeper which has lived and thrived on it and gives it strength and support in return; and Brabantio could not hate his child, neither could he deny her his paternal blessing, despite the disregard she had shown him. His own happiness was at an end, but hers, if indeed there was any in store for her, he would not ruin. So the kind father, abandoning his patrician pride, called the Moor near him to give the daughter's hand into his (now he had no reason to blame him and must needs take the mangled matter at the best): but no sooner had the tawny soldier approached the lovely lily of Venice than their union seemed a sin, and the gift which the old man made with the hands he right away revoked with the heart:

> "I here do give thee that with all my heart
> Which, but thou hast already, with all my heart
> I would keep from thee.—For your sake, jewel,

I am glad at soul I have no other child;
For thy escape would teach me tyranny,
To hang clogs on them.—I have done my lord."

Indeed, it was more a giving up than a gift, and the lips that could not curse would not utter a blessing. Poor father! Unhappy daughter! Who could interpret their loving hearts to each other and bring them together? Above all sense of wounded pride, above all feeling of humiliation, above every selfish thought and consideration, the parent's soul was convulsed with pity and grief on account of the ill-fated child. She had rushed into a foolish union and was doomed to be unhappy, and there was no way of rescuing her or remedying the evil. His life has become void and empty, and hers was destined to be miserable. It was a double grief, a double shock. He must forget it—he should be done with her and forget her. Was it possible?

Ill-starred Desdemona! Has she broken her father's heart in her effort to save the Moor? But fate is kind to her, though only to preserve her life for a most cruel conclusion. She has dealt a fatal blow to her dear father, but she knows it not and her ears are never to hear of it. The old man's grief she mistook for wrath, and his harsh words seemed to her the outbursts of "impatience." What had she said to merit them, and how could she have helped saying it? She had acknowledged him as the "lord of duty"—of love and obedience—in that she was his daughter and owed her life and education to him: was it wrong to implore him, kind father that he was, to allow her to transfer a portion of that duty—of that love and obedience—to the lord of her choice? Had not her mother done so before her? Then, why was the good father angry and excited, why was he impatient and impervious to her prayer? Was

he going to cut her off? She was not frightened in the least. She had acted the heroine's part and was prepared to act it out to the very end. The idea had a special charm for her native purity and sincerity, and strengthened her with the courage of suffering and resignation. Gentle reader, privileged to follow the course and current of Desdemona's life, think you she was lacking of filial piety and affection? Say you that she spoke to her father, not like a loving and dutiful child appealing to his heart, but "like an advocate addressing his reason," or, "like a debter settling with his creditors,—so much is due to one, so much to another, and so much to a third," and insisted "as coolly upon her right as Shylock upon his bond"? *

IX

Scarcely five minutes had elapsed since the ancient was sent to fetch Desdemona from the Sagittary when the lady presented herself in the council-chamber and every one was struck with the expedition of Iago's return. But before a word was said or asked about it, the damsel's appeal to her father and the old man's disquiet and distress created a most singular scene and absorbed all interest. The bold decision of the young daughter appeared as strange as the father's predicament was pitiful. Indeed, Brabantio was utterly disconsolate. His reconciliation to the event of the night was impossible, and he bade a final farewell to the child who had chosen to desert him. And he requested the Duke to proceed with the business which had been interrupted on his account. The Duke, however, was moved with pity for the poor father and the lovers who had incurred his serious displeasure. It was no doubt

* *Friederich Bodenstedt,* quoted in *The New Variorum Othello,* p. 440.

an odd and extravagant match and involved a hard trial to the feelings of old Brabantio, but the mischief was done and could not be remedied. The motherless girl had disposed of herself and the father must acquiesce in her act in a spirit of wise resignation :

> "When remedies are past, the griefs are ended
> By seeing the worst, which late on hopes depended.
> To mourn a mischief that is past and gone
> Is the next way to draw new mischief on.
> What cannot be preserv'd when fortune takes,
> Patience her injury a mockery makes.
> The robb'd that smiles steals something from the thief ;
> He robs himself that spends a bootless grief."

This is the wholesome advice the Duke offers to his old friend and senator; but it gives little comfort to the injured father and only stings him into the utterance of a cutting retort :

> "So let the Turks of Cyprus us beguile ;
> We lose it not, so long as we can smile."

And he continues in a serious strain :

> "He bears the sentence well that nothing bears
> But the free comfort which from thence he hears,
> But he bears both the sentence and the sorrow
> That, to pay grief, must of poor patience borrow.
> These sentences, to sugar, or to gall,
> Being strong on both sides, are equivocal :
> But words are words ; I never yet did hear
> That the bruis'd heart was piercèd through the ear."

So, he beseeches the Duke to proceed with the urgent business of state on hand.

The Duke then explains the situation of affairs to Othello and commands him to set out that very night for Cyprus, to defend the island against the attack of the Turks, and Othello is quite ready to undertake the expedition though thereby he must "slubber the gloss of his new fortunes." The tyrant custom had ever made "the flinty and steel couch of war" his "thrice-

driven bed of down" and he always felt cheerful to encounter hardships. But provision must be made for Desdemona before he could go out on the wars, and he therefore craves "fit disposition" for her—

> "Due reference of place and exhibition,
> With such accommodation and besort
> As levels with her breeding."

He had not expected to have any burden of family-life until he returned from the wars and made no arrangements therefor, neither had he thought that the father would assume such an irreconcilable attitude. And of course he had not the remotest idea of taking his wife with him.

The Duke, who still hopes that Brabantio will not deprive himself of the only comfort which was left to him, says in reply to Othello's request that of course Desdemona will stay "at her father's;" but the unfortunate father, sunk in the deepest depth of grief, utters an overhasty negation. She had chosen to leave him and had done with him, and he had done with her and could not take her back under his roof—as the wife of the Moor. The words fly from his lips—

> "I 'll not have it so."

"Nor I," echoes Othello whose pride is somewhat pricked; and before the Duke or the senators could say a word to change the father's mind, Desdemona speaks out and settles the situation. Fate has been driving her from bad to worse since evening, and it now works against her with swiftness and celerity, leaving no respite for thought or advice. The daughter would not reside at her father's, so to put him "in impatient thoughts by being in his eye," and of course she could not live without her lord, in a separate lodging in Venice, a standing disgrace and defiance to her

distressed father. She prays the Duke to graciously lend his "prosperous ear to her unfolding" and to let her have "a charter in his voice to assist her simpleness," and proceeds to address the council with firmness and courage:

> "That I love the Moor to live with him,
> My downright violence and storm of fortunes
> May trumpet to the world: my heart's subdued
> Even to the very quality of my lord:
> I saw Othello's visage in his mind,
> And to his honours and his valiant parts
> Did I my soul and fortunes consecrate.
> So that, dear lords, if I be left behind,
> A moth of peace, and he go to the war,
> The rites for why I love him are bereft me,
> And I a heavy interim shall support
> By his dear absence. Let me go with him."

The timid girl, the "maiden never bold," has become bold and heroic from sheer necessity. Within these few minutes, it became clear to her that her love to the Moor was a "downright violence" in the eye of her countrymen, an outrage to public sentiment. Her father shrank back as he placed her fair hand in the Moor's, and the Duke spoke of her marriage as a "mangled matter," a "mischief that was past and gone" and should be borne with patience by the aggrieved parent. She has evidently become an outcast from her community, and her marriage has created a "storm" in her fortunes, for her father would not take her under his roof. To crown the perplexity of her position, her lord was to set out instantly on the wars. She had never calculated all this. Indeed, much as she loved the Moor and admired him, she would not have married him without her father's consent and blessing if she had not been misled in the way she had been: not that she respected the prejudices of her community, nor that she was unwilling to risk her fortunes, but she cared

for her father, loved him dearly and would sacrifice anything—even her own happiness—for his sake. But it was now too late to think of it. She had taken a rash, and considering her father's attitude unfortunate step, but she would blame no one for it. Neither would she regret it, for indeed she loved the Moor, loved him in spite of his colour and complexion, and was prepared to live and die with him. And the Duke and senators need no more be astonished at her choice, for she explained that she "saw Othello's visage in his mind" and "to his honours and his valiant parts" did consecrate her "soul and fortunes," and now begged leave to accompany him to the wars.

It was plain, however, that Desdemona's prayer was the sudden inspiration of the moment, the result of the critical situation which left her no choice. She had never dreamt of accompanying Othello, nor Othello of taking her, to the wars. Indeed, as we have seen, when ordered to start off forthwith, the general did not solicit permission to take his bride with him but only begged "fit disposition" for her. He would certainly have been glad to take her with him, but he feared it would be too great a hardship and trial for the gentle damsel to follow him. And now, when she herself loathed to be left behind and wished to accompany him, he was transported with delight and felt proud of his warrior-wife, and added his prayer to hers to induce the Duke and senators to grant her request :

> "Vouch with me, heaven, I therefore beg it not,
> To please the palate of my appetite
> Nor to comply with heat the young affects,
> In my defunct and proper satisfaction,
> But to be free and bounteous to her mind :
> And heaven defend your good souls, that you think
> I will your serious and great business scant
> When she is with me. No, when light-wing'd toys
> Of feather'd Cupid seel with wanton dulness

My speculative and offic'd instrument,
That my disports corrupt and taint my business,
Let housewives make a skillet of my helm,
And all indign and base adversities
Make head against my estimation !"

Speech upon speech in that short hour, full of feeling and sentiment, of strange revelation and stranger request. The permission asked for is granted, but "the affair cries haste" and Othello must start off immediately, leaving some officer behind to bring him the formal "commission" of appointment and "such things else of quality and respect" as the Duke and senators (who will meet again at nine in the morning) may deem important to send after him. Othello leaves Iago behind for this purpose, and likewise entrusts Desdemona to his escort and conveyance. The meeting terminates; and the Duke, in bidding "good night to every one," says a kind word to his old friend:

"And noble signior,
If virtue no delighted beauty lack,
Your son-in-law is far more fair than black."

And the first senator, feeling pity for Desdemona, gives a bit of parting advice to the Moor:

"Adieu, brave Moor! use Desdemona well."

Brabantio, however, was in no mood to receive either remark in a kindly spirit. Both stung him to the quick and he almost wished that the Duke had been blessed with the typical son-in-law he so much appreciated. The senator's advice to Othello only too sadly confirmed his own fears, and prognosticated evil from the strange and foolish union. His heart was torn with grief and pity and distress; he burnt with rage against everything and everybody; and alas! he sent forth a poisoned shaft against his own dear child!—

"Look to her, Moor, if thou hast eyes to see;
She has deceiv'd her father, and may thee."

Cruel words from the lips of a kind and loving parent! But, in truth, they contained no curse, but a prediction—no note of warning, but the shadow of a coming calamity. Within those three hours, Desdemona had been transformed from a good, gentle, loving child into a strange, reckless, heartless monster! She had cast off her father and all, chosen the Moor as her god, consecrated herself to his service, and was ready to live and die for him! How could any good result from such a change? The first senator advised the Moor to "use Desdemona well"—to be kind and considerate to the gentle damsel who had chosen him at such a sacrifice—but where was the gentle damsel in her? She had become a deceitful devil and the Moor had better watch her with care! The heart-broken father, "made quick-sighted by sorrow," felt sure that the end of this strange business would be her death—that the Moor would some day suspect the simple girl to have deceived him even as she had deceived her own father, and put an end to her. The prediction went forth from his lips. It assumed the form of a curse and cast a dark cloud over the happiness of the union even on the wedding day. The words were heard by his own dear daughter and diminished her hope of reconciliation to her enraged father on some future day. They were heard by Othello and sank deep in his heart, though at the time he attributed them to the passion of the old man and did not heed them, for he was prepared to stake his life on his wife's fidelity and exclaimed —"My life upon her faith!" Worst of all, the unhappy words fell in the ears of the dangerous demi-devil who watched the destiny of the couple, and they showed him the weapon with which to destroy their wedded bliss.

X

There is nothing more disappointing to the devil than the failure and frustration of its schemes, nothing more excruciating than the contribution to another's happiness by the miscarriage of its diablerie. The short hour that witnessed the strange scene before the council was to Iago a most trying time. Othello was not only honourably acquitted but was allowed to take his bride with him to the wars. Iago had made a big fool of himself, for his very villany had brought bliss to his general. What was next to do to satisfy his spite, to quench his soul's thirst, to soothe his mortal agony? His fertile brain felt somewhat confused, but luck played readily into his hands and guided him to the groove of thought. Othello cannot take Desdemona in his own ship (she had not even a change of clothing and had no outfit for the voyage), and he can spend with her "but an hour of love, of worldly matters and direction." Iago must look to everything and take her in his ship in the company of Emilia, and he receives the welcome commission from his general:

> "Honest Iago,
> My Desdemona must I leave to thee;
> I prithee, let thy wife attend on her,
> And bring them after in the best advantage."

Yes, Iago and his wife had proved the best of friends to the Moor and he owed his success of the night to their kind services, and it was good that Desdemona should have the help of her maid during the voyage. Iago was glad that he had not worked in vain, for he was "honest Iago" to the Moor, and bride and bridegroom were to be separated even at that very hour. His new plan was already in embryo—thanks to the old

father—and there was time for hatching it. He would never forget the old man's plaint that nought but witchcraft could have induced his daughter *"to fall in love with what she feared to look on,"* nor the parting curse he had let fall on her, even through the Moor—*"She has deceived her father, and may thee."* Iago's quick brain already perceived a promising field for work in these unhappy words. The Moor has been told that Desdemona *might* deceive him, and he should be told in good time that she *did* deceive him—that her faith to him was as false as water. And the man with whom she might be criminated was present before Iago's eyes even as these thoughts revolved in his head. The material was ready to hand ; it only needed to be moulded and worked into shape.

XI

But how about Roderigo? The poor man watched the strange scene in the council-chamber with alternate hope and despair and felt at length that his life was not worth living. The prize he was coveting was snatched away by a stranger, and he had to chew the bitter cud of disappointment. He was undoubtedly in the bad books of fate; for, when Desdemona would have married him the father interfered, and when the old man welcomed him the damsel had already disposed of herself! And she was so pronounced, too, in her strange choice! This was too much for his poor nerves to bear, and he had been at the affair for over a year and well-nigh exhausted his rich inheritance over it. He did not, however, feel sorry for the money he had spent, nor for the jewels he had sent as presents (he was glad to see one of them, a pretty bracelet, on Desdemona's hand even as it was placed in Othello's, and he felt convinced of

the honesty of Iago and his wife): he was disgusted with his own ill-luck and defeat. Where was the use of prolonging life "when to live was torment?" and he was inclined to go home and "incontinently drown" himself.

Iago rebukes the "silly gentleman" for his idea of drowning himself "for the love of a guinea-hen," and he does it of course not out of any great concern for the friend's life as for the gold that may yet be scraped from him. He treats him to a long and learned discourse on "the power and corrigible authority" of the will and exhorts him to guide himself by "reason" and to shake off that which he called "love," which was "merely a lust of the blood and a permission of the will." Roderigo shakes his head. He cannot so easily follow his friend's advice, and is evidently willing to postpone his contemplated death if any hope was still left for him, and is of course ready to stake the remainder of his fortune on the event. Poor, foolish lover! Iago marks his hankering, pats him on the back, and revives his hope with a most encouraging speech:

"Come, be a man. Drown thyself! drown cats and blind puppies. I have professed me thy friend, and I confess me knit to thy deserving with cables of perdurable toughness; I could never better stead thee than now. Put money in thy purse; follow these wars; defeat thy favour with an usurped beard; I say, put money in thy purse. It cannot be that Desdemona should long continue her love to the Moor,—put money in thy purse,—nor he his to her: it was a violent commencement, and thou shalt see an answerable sequestration;—put but money in thy purse. These Moors are changeable in their wills;—fill thy purse with money:—the food that to him now is as luscious as locusts, shall be to him shortly as bitter as coloquintida. She must change for youth: when she is sated with his body, she will find the error of her choice; she must have change, she must: therefore put money in thy purse. If thou wilt needs damn thyself, do it a more delicate way than drowning. Make all the money thou canst: if sanctimony and a frail vow betwixt an erring barbarian and a supersubtle Venetian be not too hard for my wits and all the tribe of hell, thou shalt enjoy her; therefore make money. A pox of drowning thyself! it is clean out of the way; seek thou rather to be hanged in compassing thy joy than to be drowned and go without her."

"Wilt thou be fast to my hopes, if I depend on the issue?" asks the ill-fated man who feels quite cheered up, and the good friend repeats his assurance:

> "Thou art sure of me.—Go, make money.—I have told thee often, and I re-tell thee again and again, I hate the Moor: my cause is hearted; thine hath no less reason. Let us be conjunctive in our revenge against him; if thou canst cuckold him, thou dost thyself a pleasure, me a sport. There are many events in the womb of time which will be delivered. Traverse! go, provide thy money. We will have more of this to-morrow. Adieu."

The drowning man is saved. He is "changed." He will "go sell all his land" and enlist himself as a soldier betimes in the morning and follow his friend to the wars. Evidently, he is not destined to meet his death by drowning himself!

XII

Iago can well afford to contemplate his situation with satisfaction. The plan he had sketched for bringing about the downfall of Othello had indeed failed, but he had no reason to be discontented with his luck, for the scheme he should now develop would work the ruin of many persons at once: of Othello and his bride, of Cassio and—well, he *might* find some way of including Bianca in the list. And he was not acting without a motive! For he hated the Moor, and his hatred had now become doubly sharp, in consequence of that ugly revelation which the fool Roderigo had let out even a short while since. Emilia was suspected with the Moor and there was "scandal" talked about her, and he could well understand the misgivings of the simple dupe when he said she must have been a party to the general's love-intrigue. The ancient has evidently suffered in his reputation by lending the services of his wife to his general. Her secret visits

to him had no doubt created the scandal, but perhaps, perhaps it was true, and he knew women were such double devils! He would accept his "mere suspicion in that kind" as "surety" and proceed to work out his revenge. Oh, "the motive-hunting of a motiveless malignity!" And how was he situated? The general was fully impressed with his honesty and love, and was of a simple, unsuspecting nature, too; Cassio was "a proper man" and had "a person and a smooth dispose to be suspected, fram'd to make women false;" and Roderigo was a useful implement in his hands. Good heavens! his brain has already evolved the scheme! What was it? By some means or other to bring about the lieutenant's dismissal and to get his place: to befriend him in his trouble and advise him to seek Desdemona's intercession: after some time, to abuse Othello's ear that he is too familiar with his wife. By Jove! it was a "double knavery"—the killing of two birds with one stone! Let us hear the villain speaking to himself after sending the dupe away to fill his purse with money:

"Thus do I ever make my fool my purse;
For I mine own gain'd knowledge should profane,
If I would time expend with such a snipe,
But for my sport and profit. I hate the Moor;
And it is thought abroad, that 'twixt my sheets
He has done my office: I know not if 't be true;
But I, for mere suspicion in that kind,
Will do as if for surety. He holds me well;
The better shall my purpose work on him.
Cassio's a proper man: let me see now;
To get his place and to plume up my will
In double knavery—How, how?—Let's see:—
After some time, to abuse Othello's ear
That he is too familiar with his wife.
He hath a person and a smooth dispose
To be suspected, fram'd to make women false.
The Moor is of a free and open nature,
That thinks men honest that but seem to be so,

> And will as tenderly be led by the nose
> As asses are.
> I have 't. It is engender'd. Hell and night
> Must bring this monstrous birth to the world's light."

Who can escape the manœvres of this man-fiend? and he is continually helped by the very fate of his victims! If the emergency to send off Othello to Cyprus had not arisen at the very hour of the wedding, if Desdemona had knelt before her unhappy father and begged for the shelter of his home, if the kind-hearted father had not refused it, who can deny that events might have taken a different turn altogether? If the Moor had been black as coal, as many critics and commentators have fancied, who can deny that the marriage might have been annulled notwithstanding the damsel's declaration that she "saw Othello's visage in his mind;" for then, apart from any suspicion of witchcraft, the monstrous and absolutely revolting choice would itself have been conclusive proof, to the Duke and senators, of the screw-loose condition of her brain and the consequent "want of balance" in her mind? And who can deny, too, that proud Brabantio might easily have been reconciled to his son-in-law if, along with the "round, unvarnish'd tale" of his course of love, the Moor had revealed his royal birth and rank? But alas! life must roll on accidents which the hand of fate throws across its rugged path.

XIII

Brabantio went home from the council-chamber with a distressed and desolate feeling, thoroughly dissatisfied with himself and his fate. Had he been too kind to the motherless child? or had her solitary and exclusive life deprived her of all worldly experience? Whatever it might be, there was surely some mistake somewhere

which led the girl into the ruinous step she had taken, for the mother had been so good and the child could not be other. But it was too late, quite too late, to save her, and she was bound to come to grief. Alas, poor Desdemona! The sorrow-smitten parent went into his child's chamber and wept to see it vacant. He went near her desk; the open page proclaimed that the good girl had last been reading the Scriptures. He went near the piano; it prayed for the gentle touch of its player. The guitar grumbled. Books, pictures, dresses, jewels, every thing mourned for the mistress that was away. "These had better go, too," muttered the grief-shot father to himself, half in kindness to his child, half in unbearable agony, and he sent for his brother Gratiano and told him to despatch the whole lot forthwith to Desdemona. And he retired to his room, never more to see his dear daughter again!

Day dawned for Desdemona with unusual brightness and cheer. The storm in her life was blowing over, and peace and happiness, she believed, were sure to follow. She was delighted beyond all measure to get her books and things, and felt infinitely happy to think she had not forfeited her father's kindness. She knew it would be so. The good father was at times harsh in words, but his heart was never hard; and now his reconciliation was assured after her lord's return from the wars. And such a glorious return it should be! The kind child loved the old father more than ever and hoped to make amends very soon for the hard hour he had experienced on her account. Alas, vain hope, and the sad sequel which shattered it!

CHAPTER IV

THE LANDING IN CYPRUS

I

FROM the very next day after the Venetian reinforcements sailed under the command of Othello and his lieutenant, a most desperate tempest raged over the sea and blew towards Cyprus. It created a very great commotion at Famugusta, the seaport city of the island, which the Turkish troops were expected to attack; for, if the storm should help their speed and bring them to the port before help arrived from Venice (it was yet a week too soon to expect any), the enemy might get the best of it. But it was just as likely that the tempest might stop the progress of the Turkish fleet altogether, if indeed it did not destroy it. For, the wind spoke quite aloud at land—"a fuller blast ne'er shook the battlements"—and it "ruffian'd so upon the sea," it was impossible to think that "any ribs of oak" could "hold the mortise." Indeed, "the chidden billow" seemed "to pelt the clouds;" "the wind-shak'd surge, with high and monstrous mane" seemed "to cast water on the burning Bear, and quench the guards of the ever-fixed pole;" there never was "like molestation" viewed "on the enchafèd flood."

For full six days the storm continued with unabated fury. It has just subsided. Groups of people run in different directions to the shore, to see if any ship is visible at sea; but it is still "a high-wrought flood" and not a sail can be descried "'twixt the heaven and the main." Montano, the governor of the island, walks

up to the open place near the quay and two gentlemen bring him information about the condition of the sea. It is still quite boisterous, and neither friend nor enemy can be expected to arrive. Montano feels sure—

> " If that the Turkish fleet
> Be not enshelter'd and embay'd, they are drown'd ;
> It is impossible they bear it out."

Even then, news is brought that a noble ship of Venice has arrived and she had seen " grievous wreck and sufferance on most part" of the Turkish fleet. A Veronessa * (the fair sex ever receives the first attention !) and Michael Cassio, "lieutenant to the warlike Moor, Othello," have come on shore ; and the Moor himself is at sea and is "in full commission" for Cyprus : Cassio is, however, feeling uneasy about the safety of his general from whom he was parted by " foul and violent tempest," and is wearing a sad look despite the happy tidings he brings " touching the Turkish loss." Montano is extremely glad to learn that Othello has been appointed to relieve him. " 'Tis a worthy governor" into whose hands he should be pleased to resign his office at such a critical time, and he had served under him and seen how he commanded " like a full soldier." He prays for his safe arrival and all proceed to the seaside " as well to see the vessel that's come in" as to look for " brave Othello."

Having given directions for the lodging of his mistress, Cassio meets Montano on the plain and confirms the news already conveyed to him about Othello. " Is

* See note on '*A Veronessa*,' II. i. 26. In support of the explanation there given that the reference is to Bianca, it may be interesting to point out that, in the Folio, *Veronessa* is printed in italics like *Florentine* in I. i. 19. The folios as well as the quartos have a colon after 'put in' (II. i. 25) and there is no warrant for ignoring this and misinterpreting the text or altering it. For the use of 'is' for 'are', see V. ii. 329: 'Your power and your command *is* taken off.'

he well shipp'd?" asks the retiring governor; and Cassio answers:

> "His bark is stoutly timber'd, and his pilot
> Of very expert and approv'd allowance."

Cassio feels his hopes about the general's safety quite revived. Just then, a cry is heard at a distance—'A sail, a sail, a sail!' and a great bustle and rush of people attract attention. Information arrives that

> "The town is empty; on the brow o' the sea
> Stand ranks of people, and they cry 'A sail!'"

Surely, a most unusual occurrence, that every soul in the city should fly to the shore in such hot haste. Cassio hopes Othello has arrived; and salutes, too, are heard and leave no doubt that a friendly vessel has put in. Montano thinks, however, that such intense interest and enthusiasm must be due to the arrival of some rare specimen of the fair sex, of excelling beauty, and asks Cassio—

> "But, good lieutenant, is your general wiv'd?"

The reply he receives determines all doubt, for the lieutenant tells him that his general has achieved a most exquisite and extraordinary beauty. But a gentleman brings news that it is Iago, ancient to the general, who has arrived; and Montano feels puzzled again, while Cassio, at once agreeably disappointed and surprised, bursts out into a most happy exclamation:

> "He's had most favourable and happy speed.
> Tempests themselves, high seas, and howling winds,
> The gutter'd rocks, and congregated sands,—
> Traitors ensteep'd to enclog the guiltless keel,
> As having sense of beauty, do omit
> Their mortal natures, letting go safely by
> The divine Desdemona."

It was indeed most marvellous that Iago's ship, which left Venice a few hours after Othello's and Cassio's,

should have arrived even before Othello's, and quite safe! The marvel could only be explained by the presence of the divine Desdemona on board the ship. "Who is she?" asks Montano who notes that he has not been wrong in his guess about a lady's arrival, but cannot take her to be the general's wife, for the general has not arrived. She is

"Our great captain's captain,
Left in the conduct of the bold Iago,"

explains Cassio. She has arrived after a voyage of but *seven* days!—quite seven days sooner than usual. The lieutenant is lost in astonishment and delight, and prays that Othello's ship may be blessed with a like "favourable and happy speed"—

"That he may bless this bay with his tall ship,
Make love's quick pants in Desdemona's arms,
Give renew'd fire to our extincted spirits,
And bring all Cyprus comfort!"

II

Desdemona comes on the scene with Emilia and Iago, Roderigo (in disguise, of course) and attendants following. She is indeed a divine beauty, and her gentle grace and charm spread their fascination all around. Cassio kneels to her and kisses the hand she courteously offers, and all knees are bent before the earthly angel while he greets her with enthusiastic admiration:

"Oh, behold,
The riches of the ship is come on shore!
Ye men of Cyprus, let her have your knees.—
Hail to thee, lady! and the grace of heaven,
Before, behind thee, and on every hand,
Enwheel thee round!"

It is evident to Desdemona that her lord has not yet

arrived, and she is anxious to know what tidings Cassio can tell her about him; but Cassio's answer is not at all reassuring:

> "He is not yet arriv'd; nor know I aught
> But that he's well and will be shortly here."

The furious tempest which raged on the sea and drove the ship at double speed throughout the voyage did not alarm Desdemona in any degree. She could not for a moment think that evil could befall herself or her lord: the tempest in their life had blown over and she believed nought but peace and bliss was in store for them. She was therefore not a little disappointed to find that her lord was yet to arrive; for, though her faith was not shaken and she did not entertain any fear about his ultimate safety, yet she felt sorry for the painful suspense which had fallen to her lot and would have been glad if there was no occasion for it.

The suspense becomes doubly unbearable, for a ship arrives presently into the harbour and gives its greeting to the citadel. Desdemona feels sure it is her lord's, and a messenger is forthwith despatched to ascertain the news; but until he returns, her certainty is merely a hope, and the flutter in her heart cannot allow her ease and mirth.

Cassio now offers his greeting to Iago and his wife, and in giving his salutation to the latter, he good-humouredly adds to the ancient:

> "Let it not gall your patience, good Iago,
> That I extend my manners; 'tis my breeding
> That gives me this bold show of courtesy"—

for he kisses her. Whatever his real feelings, Iago puts on a happy countenance over this free expression of Cassio's welcome to Emilia:

> "Sir, would she give you so much of her lips
> As of her tongue she oft bestows on me,
> You'd have enough."

Iago thus sets the ball of conversation in motion by attacking his own wife, and it is kept rolling until Othello effects his landing and comes amidst the group. Desdemona welcomes the diversion, undignified as it is, for it helps her to "beguile the thing she is by seeming otherwise." She had heard a good bit of the bluff ancient's blunt banter on board the ship, and it could bear no harm to permit him to indulge in it for a short while, now that she was not merry.

The hit against Emilia, of whose tongue the husband pretends to live in mortal fear, being resented by the wife, Iago proceeds to cut her with his own coarse picture of wives in general:

> "Come on, come on; you are pictures out of doors, bells in your parlours, wild-cats in your kitchens, saints in your injuries, devils being offended, players in your housewifery, and housewifes in your beds."

Desdemona defends her good maid against the unjust aspersions of her husband, by a prompt rebuke:

> "Oh, fie upon thee, slanderer!"

And to turn the conversation from the poor creature, she asks the outspoken censor—

> "What wouldst thou write of me, if thou shouldst praise me?"

Iago begs the gentle lady not to put him to the task, for he is "nothing if not critical;" but a little coaxing suffices to make him speak, and he speaks quite like himself:

> "If she be fair and wise, fairness and wit,
> The one's for use, the other useth it.
> *Des.* Well prais'd! How if she be black and witty?
> *Iago.* If she be black, and thereto have a wit,
> She 'll find a white that shall her blackness fit.
> *Des.* Worse and worse.
> *Emil.* How if fair and foolish?
> *Iago.* She never yet was foolish that was fair;
> For even her folly help'd her to an heir.

Des. These are old fond paradoxes to make fools laugh i' the alehouse. What miserable praise hast thou for her that's foul and foolish ?

Iago. There's none so foul and foolish thereunto,
But does foul pranks which fair and wise ones do.

Des. Oh, heavy ignorance! thou praisest the worst best. But what praise couldst thou bestow on a deserving woman indeed, one that in the authority of her merit did justly put on the vouch of very malice itself ?"

In response to this challenge, Iago draws the picture of Desdemona herself, but spoils it by a "most lame and impotent conclusion"—that such a woman of true desert if ever there was one, would only be fit

"To suckle fools and chronicle small beer :"

and for nothing better!

Desdemona has had quite enough of the coarse and cynical insinuations of the critic, and dismisses him as "a most profane and liberal counsellor," advising Emilia not to learn of him though he is her husband. She then withdraws with Cassio to a little distance and tells him all about her father's kindness to her, subsequent to her lord's sailing, and the good friend, who entertains the sincerest wishes for the happiness of the general and his wife, is simply delighted with the happy news and the certain prospect of the old father's reconciliation.

Iago watches the conversation and is completely put out by the courteous attentions and gallantry of the smooth-faced lieutenant; and he cannot help pouring out his venomous heart to himself :

"He takes her by the palm : ay, well said, whisper; with as little a web as this will I ensnare as great a fly as Cassio. Ay, smile upon her, do; I will gyve thee in thine own courtship. You say true ; 'tis so, indeed: it such tricks as these strip you out of your lieutenantry, it had been better you had not kissed your three fingers so oft, which now again you are most apt to play the sir in. Very good; well-kissed! an excellent courtesy ! 'tis so, indeed. Yet again your fingers to your lips ? Would they were clyster-pipes for your sake."

Othello's trumpet announces his arrival, and all proceed to meet him and receive him.

III

Bride and bridegroom are brought together for the first time after the cruel separation on the wedding-night, and their meeting must imply unique joy and happiness both to them and the onlookers who love them. "O my fair warrior!" exclaimed Othello, as with a staggering gait he rushed towards Desdemona and entwined his arms around her. "My dear Othello!" uttered the frightened damsel, as she supported the reeling lover on her tender arms and marked his breathless voice and bewildered look; and the tears which gathered in his eyes called forth sympathy from her own. The bystanders were struck with amazement. The reunion of the parted lovers was a most pathetic spectacle; but not a soul could guess or gauge the wild perturbation in Othello's mind or the painful perplexity in his bride's.

Desdemona has never yet known any sorrow, nor felt any trouble. Her marriage had indeed landed her in trial, but it disappeared with the darkness of the night, and peace and hope prevailed in her mind. She knew nothing of the heart-broken condition of her father and believed his anger had given place to kindness, and trusted that the time was not far off when she should return to her happy home. What wonder if the storm on the sea, which frightened Iago and everybody on board the ship, seemed to the simple lady a godsend to take her quickly to her lord! She was no doubt disappointed to find, on landing, that her lord was still at sea, but the discomfort lasted only a minute, for Othello arrived presently, to be surprised, she liked to think, with a double joy. But what was her own surprise and fear and perplexity when her lord flew into her embrace, a living corpse scarce able to hold her

in his arms, and gasped for breath and utterance? Oh, what was the matter with him?

Othello has never been in a happy mood since that eventful night which made Desdemona his bride. He had indeed won a divine damsel whom he prized above everything else on earth and would not give up for a whole "world of one entire and perfect chrysolite," but he was vexed that events had not transpired just as he had calculated, vexed, too, that the old father had assumed a most unhappy and irreconcilable attitude. The Moor had no doubt come off clean and honourably from the disgraceful charge preferred against him, but his heart was soon moved with pity for the poor father whom he had robbed of his only daughter; and he thought the old man might have sanctioned the marriage had he been approached in the proper way, perhaps he might have reconciled himself to his dear child and her choice, if he had learnt the royal birth and heritage of his son-in-law, and learnt, too, that his daughter's hand had been sought, not for reaching a fortune, but with a most pure and perfect heart. Oh, how unfortunate that, in the hurly-burly and excitement of the hour, he had forgotten to make this revelation! And how good it had been for dear Desdemona not to have lost the love of her father, to have retained the shelter of his home! How much more honourable it had been for himself to have approached the kind father and secured the daughter's hand with his consent and blessing! In spite of the strong prejudice which old Brabantio had discovered against him in the council-chamber, in spite of the insinuations even of the Duke and the first senator, Othello believed that the way of truth might have melted the heart of the loving father, and a disclosure of his own rank would have made him a welcome son-in-law. But fate had

ordained it otherwise. The Cyprus trouble had hurried him into a secret wedding, and it had separated him from his bride though she was to follow him at his very heels, for he could not wait till she was equipped for the voyage. The pity and humiliation of his unpreparedness struck him almost as the punishment for a crime, and the bitterness of it grew worse when he thought of his gentle wife's bold advocacy before the Senate, which had won him his cause, and her heroic resolve to accompany him to the wars. Was he going to deserve her? or was he still to be mocked by fate?

Scarcely half a day had elapsed since leaving Venice and Desdemona, when it seemed to Othello that he was destined nevermore to see the city or meet his new-won bride. The very gods seemed to condemn his secret wedding and set the elements against him, and there was little hope of his sailing safe through the huge storm which broke out and drove his own bark and the lieutenant's with the most reckless speed. Any moment the ships might come to grief against a "gutter'd rock" or sink in the deep ocean—they were so absolutely at the mercy of the waves and the winds, and it counted little that they were "stoutly timber'd" and steered by no ordinary pilots. Day by day the storm increased in vigour and vehemence. "The wind-shak'd surge" hid the heaven in the main and the end seemed to have drawn near to every one who had been involved in the infraction of parental rights—the disruption of domestic peace. The end was near to them and many innocent souls besides. And it was no mere superstition, no phantom fear that might pass away in a while. Othello had passed through many a severe storm at sea and survived many a danger, but never had he been in such a forlorn plight, never had he given up hope and courage. It was nothing short of a miracle that the vessels

had stood the tempest's rage and kept together for over five days. Where wére they, whither were they going, and how long could they keep company or escape the danger which besieged them all around? Oh, utter deperation! Oh, wreck and ruin inevitable! Alas, poor Desdemona! Why did she marry him, and why did she choose to follow him? Oh, the dreadful howling of the winds, the terrible tossing of the waves! Had they frightened her to death? Oh, was she dead or alive!

Mighty god of the sea! The Turkish fleet is drowned! Cassio has seen the shattered fragments of a ship and signalled to his general. Oh, the tremor and trepidation in Othello's heart! Perhaps, Iago's ship has been torn to pieces! Alas, dear Desdemona! But it is a wreck of many ships. Masts, sails, ladders, rigging—all brought down by the battering waves and tossed up to view! Ha! the comfort of the enemy's perdition! the blessing of the gods! If the Venetian vessels could but safely reach their destination—if the storm was sent by heaven to destroy the Turkish ships, to grant Venice an easy victory, to bring the general and his bride quickly together—what unspeakable bliss! what joy! what jubilee!

Alas, the dream! Alas, the victor's destruction! Where is Cassio's bark? Has she been swallowed up by the sea? Has she been swept away by the stupendous billow which hurled her to the sky? Alas, good lieutenant! Oh, the fate of the general's own ship! She is falling into the very pit of hell from the height of heaven! Now she is pitched up higher still to be brought lower down! She cannot stand the blows, she must break to bits and fragments. The pilot has lost hope. Othello and all say their prayers!

Desdemona! Desdemona! Desdemona! May the Almighty protect you from all peril! May He land you

safe and take you back to your loving father! May He bless you with peace and happiness! And may He, in his mercy, forgive the sins of this unfortunate Moor!—this is the cry of Othello's soul, the burden of his prayer. Desdemona! Desdemona! Desdemona! The warrior-wife that would brave the war to accompany her lord! She has even conquered a warrior! His soul yearned for her in life, and now, in the moment of death, it prayed for her—Desdemona, the daughter of heaven! May the Lord keep you safe and happy!

Wonder of wonders! The shores of Cyprus within view! Is it a fact or a fancy? Is it possible? The mercy of the gods! If Desdemona and the others should likewise land in safety! But oh, the dreadful alternative! Oh, the fall from heaven to hell!

Othello's ship has anchored. The greeting is given to the citadel. Ah, the reality of the vision! The life from the jaws of death! The resurrection from the watery grave! The general is ashore. Eager crowds gather around him. Hurrah for the general! Hurrah for the general's wife! She has already come on shore; and Cassio has landed, too. Othello has reached the pinnacle of bliss! His fair warrior already arrived—his dear Desdemona to receive him—his vainest wishes fulfilled! Can ever the gods grant him a greater boon? Can ever his cup of happiness be fuller? It is too much of joy for him. It is too high a place in the heavens to be free from fear. The valiant general can hardly walk. He cannot speak. He runs and rushes into the bosom of his guardian angel, and can only mutter a faint exclamation—"O my fair warrior!"

"My dear Othello!" ejaculates the frightened wife, conquering fear with courage, and her lovely eyes look lovelier with the tears which fill them. It is a shock to every one present, too great a surprise and

joy to every soul. All hearts throb violently, all eyes melt in sympathy. A death-silence prevails for two minutes, and the vanquished warrior recovers himself and relieves the suspense by his speech:

> "It gives me wonder great as my content
> To see you here before me. O my soul's joy!
> If after every tempest come such calms,
> May the winds blow till they have waken'd death!
> And let the labouring bark climb hills of seas
> Olympus-high, and duck again as low
> As hell's from heaven! If it were now to die,
> 'Twere now to be most happy; for, I fear,
> My soul hath her content so absolute
> That not another comfort like to this
> Succeeds in unknown fate."

Yes, he had abandoned all hope and accepted his own and everybody else's death as a decree inevitable. He only prayed for Desdemona's safety. He would have been content if the gods had saved her, and granted him but a moment's look at her, a second's speech with her. But he concluded it was denied him, sinner that he was. How could he pray for a miracle to be worked on his account? How could he have thought that, for the sake of the children of Venice, a miracle would be worked—the destruction of the Turkish fleet, the safe landing of the Venetian ships! Aha! the unexpected bliss, the realisation of an undreamt dream! —the restoration of the dead to life! the arrival of Desdemona even before himself! Greater joy and happiness Othello can never wish for, nor ever can have; and, too truly, he feels: "If it were now to die, 'twere now to be most happy." Ominous words at the very commencement of one's bliss! But Desdemona, relieved from her painful perplexity, at once expels their evil import:

> "The heavens forbid
> But that our loves and comforts should increase,
> Even as our days do grow."

In the tender arms of his loving angel, Othello has by now recovered his earthly senses; and, choked as he is for utterance by the surfeit of his joy, he yet imprints two loving kisses on her lips, and assures himself of the reality of his happiness:

> " I cannot speak enough of this content;
> It stops me here; it is too much of joy:
> And this, and this, the greatest discords be
> That e'er our hearts shall make!"

Othello wakes up from his transport, and, seeing the crowd around him, tells them the welcome news about the enemy's loss and accosts his old friends of the isle:

> " News, friends; our wars are done, the Turks are drown'd.
> How does my old acquaintance of this isle?"

But he is still unable to stand well, or speak to the people without returning to his own joy and happiness and prattling out of fashion. So, he commissions Iago to go to the bay and disembark his coffers and to conduct the master of the ship to the citadel, and himself proceeds with Desdemona and attendants to the castle close by. As he goes, he orders Cassio to forthwith proclaim the tidings about the destruction of the Turkish fleet, and, in commemoration of the happy event as well as the general's nuptials which will take place that night, to announce a public holiday and festivity until eleven o' clock; and he further commands him to "watch on the court of guard."

IV

The uncomfortable emotions which preceded the love-raptures of Othello and Desdemona were of course imperceptible to the spectators. To them, it was a meeting of parted lovers, a scene of unbounded joy and ecstasy, which vibrated a sympathetic chord in their hearts. There was but one person who felt miserable

at the happy sight. The sweet 'seals of love' which Othello impressed on the lips of Desdemona electrified the bystanders with a feeling of happiness; but Iago they pricked into the utterance of a most malevolent aside:

> "Oh, you are well tuned now!
> But I'll set down the pegs that make this music,
> As honest as I am."

To this good man, in whose honesty and sincerity the Moor reposed the most implicit trust, the happiness of any human being is an irritant poison! and when that happiness has resulted from his own act, it is torture and agony unbearable, and his malignity must discover some method of marring it!

Things have not gone very pleasantly for Iago during the last half-hour. It was comforting news to him to be told on landing that Othello had not yet arrived, and he wished with all his heart that he might never arrive and hoped his ship had shared the fate of the Turkish fleet. It burnt his soul to mark the enthusiastic welcome given to Desdemona by Cassio, and the kind and courteous manner in which she regarded him and spoke to him. The lieutenant was treated as a gentleman and friend while the ancient was looked upon as a rude soldier fit only for service and pleasantry! And the scoundrel to make bold to kiss Emilia—so substantially—even in his own presence! How could he be sure that the smooth-tongued rogue, who had given such a full and free expression to his salutation had not conquered her already? And Emilia, too, gave her lips to him so willingly! He should never place any faith in women. The more he scanned Emilia's looks and words, the more she looked to him a creature of hell. The scandal which connected her with the Moor had been worrying him for a week, and now it looked as if Cassio, too, was

intimate with her. Oh, wretchedness! that the enemies whose ruin he was planning should turn his own weapons against him and get the better of him! This thought "gnawed his inwards like a poisonous mineral" and made him miserable: not that he was jealous of his wife's honour—no—but that his glory was to injure others uninjured, or if injured, to revenge himself upon them. His misery reached its highest point when Othello arrived and threw himself into the embrace of his bride, and the happiness of the pair seemed to have begun. Good God! When was he going to end this paradise? Well—he had already sketched the plan. He should get through the initial step and other steps would follow in due course. And the initial step—the dismissal of Cassio—should be compassed through Roderigo as early as possible.

Iago accordingly tells his dupe to meet him "presently at the harbour," whither he is going to disembark the luggage of the Moor; but he has scarcely gone a few paces when his course of action is suggested by the instructions he had just overheard the general giving his lieutenant, and he turns back and calls Roderigo near, to explain how matters stand and to tell him what he must do to accomplish his end. And the poor man who, besides frittering away all his fortune, has compromised himself by the disguise he had assumed, must *nolens volens* accept the conclusions as well as the counsels of his friend, and even put up with his abusive language! The lieutenant is to watch at night on the court of guard and it is a splendid opportunity for Roderigo to advance his cause! Iago proceeds to explain the riddle.

"Desdemona is directly in love" with Cassio. If Roderigo has not noticed it, he must "lay his finger" on the mouth and "let his soul be instructed." She at first loved the Moor with violence, "but for bragging

and telling her fantastical lies" and certainly cannot continue to do it. A girl of her "delicate tenderness" must have "her eye fed" and must necessarily make a second choice which should combine "loveliness in favour" with "sympathy in years, manners and beauties; all which the Moor is defective in;" and "who stands so eminent in the degree of this fortune as Cassio does ?"—

> "A knave very voluble; no further conscionable than in putting on the mere form of civil and humane seeming, for the better compassing of his salt and most hidden loose affection? why, none; why, none: a slipper and subtle knave, a finder of occasions, that has an eye can stamp and counterfeit advantages, though true advantage never present itself; a devilish knave! Besides, the knave is handsome, young, and hath all those requisities in him that folly and green minds look after: a pestilent complete knave; and the woman hath found him already."

Roderigo cannot believe this, but he *must.* He saw her "paddle with the palm" of the lieutenant's hand but he should not mistake it for "courtesy." It was "lechery," "an index and obscure prologue to the history of lust and foul thoughts;" and "they met so near with their lips that their breaths embraced together!"

But it is no good discussing these things. Roderigo has followed Iago all the way from Venice and must be ruled by him. He must listen to his advice and follow it. Cassio's removal is absolutely necessary for the success of Roderigo, for there can be no prosperity to his suit until the rival is barred from all access to Desdemona. The impediment removed, he can have quite a short journey to his desires. But how is the removal to be effected? Iago explains the plan. Cassio watches on the court of guard that night. Roderigo, whom Iago will directly appoint as one of the guard, must "find some occasion to anger him, either by speaking too loud, or tainting his discipline, or from what other course" he pleases, "which the time shall more favourably minister." Cassio, being "rash and very sudden in

choler," haply may strike at Roderigo; rather, he should "provoke him that he may;" Iago will be near at hand to sound an alarm which shall lead to a mutiny and bring about the lieutenant's dismissal.

Roderigo stands amazed at the dangerous task which is imposed upon him, but he will do it if his friend "can bring it to any opportunity. Iago, of course, warrants to bring it to the very best opportunity and tells Roderigo to meet him by and by at the citadel, and goes off to the harbour to bring the Moor's "necessaries" ashore. It is interesting to mark how, on the way, the villain reviews his position and plans:

> "That Cassio loves her, I do well believe it;
> That she loves him, 'tis apt and of great credit:
> The Moor, howbeit that I endure him not,
> Is of a constant, loving, noble nature,
> And I dare think he 'll prove to Desdemona
> A most dear husband. Now, I do love her too;
> Not out of absolute lust, though peradventure
> I stand accountant for as great a sin,
> But partly led to diet my revenge,
> For that I do suspect the lusty Moor
> Hath leap'd into my seat: the thought whereof
> Doth like a poisonous mineral gnaw my inwards;
> And nothing can or shall content my soul
> Till I am even'd with him, wife for wife,
> Or failing so, yet that I put the Moor
> At least into a jealousy so strong
> That judgment cannot cure. Which thing to do,
> If this poor trash of Venice, whom I trace
> For his quick hunting, stand the putting on,
> I'll have our Michael Cassio on the hip,
> Abuse him to the Moor in the right garb—
> For I fear Cassio with my nightcap too—
> Make the Moor thank me, love me, and reward me,
> For making him egregiously an ass
> And practising upon his peace and quiet
> Even to madness. 'T is here, but yet confus'd;
> Knavery's plain face is never seen till us'd."

Oh, the "motive-hunting," and the "complacent contemplation" of one's own villany!

CHAPTER V

THE DISMISSAL OF CASSIO

I

THE very thought that Othello's nuptials was to be celebrated on the day of landing, that his married bliss was to commence, and that it was mainly due to his own and his wife's services, made Iago feel most miserable at heart. It was some consolation to him these seven days of the voyage that the new-married couple were separated, but their union had come about and there was to be rejoicing and festivity quite as much in honour of their happy wedding as of the perdition of the Turkish fleet. There seemed to be no way of stopping the tide of the Moor's good fortune at once, but it should be disturbed, if possible, in its very inception, leaving its annihilation to a more opportune time. And what was better calculated to secure this end than an affray on the court of guard, followed by an alarm of mutiny, which should awake the general and summon him to the scene? And if the tumult and disturbance could be traced to Cassio's delinqency and his dismissal should result, well, it would be a substantial achievement—the realisation of one part of Iago's scheme of "double knavery." Everything depended on the promptness with which the " poor trash of Venice " would follow his directions and provoke Cassio into a quarrel; and the feasting and merriment, which were announced and permitted until eleven o'clock that night, should be made to furnish the requisite opportunity to Roderigo.

Before Iago returned from the harbour, he had settled

the details of his plan for the night. First, he should get the lieutenant to entrust him with the selection of the guard, so he may appoint Roderigo as one of them. Then, he should contrive to get Cassio to drink beyond his limit that he might prove useless at his post, and Roderigo, himself excited with drink, might easily provoke him and create a brawl. And Iago knew that Cassio's limit was very low: he had "very poor and unhappy brains for drinking" and never could stand even a single cup, and an additional cup was sure to make him "as full of quarrel and offence as my young mistress' dog." But how was the additional cup to be "fastened" upon him, for he was no drunkard and always took care to avoid drink lest he might be led into a derliction in his duty to which he was ever devoted? The ancient's acute brain readily suggested the solution.

Though himself of low rank and position, Iago was free and familiar with many youths of noble families: his plain speech and free criticism ever made him a welcome friend to them; and he was very well acquainted with Montano, Angelo and two or three other noble "elves of Cyprus." Montano, no doubt, was esteemed for his high ability and his serious and sedate disposition despite his youth, and he had, in a time of peace and tranquillity been appointed to rule in Cyprus; but when war was apprehended, it was considered best to have an experienced veteran in his stead, and Montano himself welcomed the relief. Indeed, he was quite a young man, and had, like many noble young men, permitted the growth of Iago's harmless intimacy with him; and the cunning villain now decided to turn this to advantage for conquering Cassio to his ruin. He would at once see Montano and Angelo and promise to tell them, in his own merry manner, the odd

tale of Othello's conquest of the Venetian beauty, which, he knew, they would be glad to hear. He would request them to join the watch that night, and invite them, too, for a short carouse at the castle with himself and the lieutenant, about ten or eleven o'clock after Othello retired; and they would be glad to see the lieutenant who had been more than a lieutenant to the Moor in his love-adventure. And courteous Cassio could not, especially on "a night of revels," very well decline to spend a few minutes with friends and Cyprus gallants who "would fain have a measure" with him to the health of the general. The rest was bound to follow. Cassio would soon get inebriate, and Roderigo would have a fine chance for carrying out his instructions without any danger of recognition, for Iago would keep the lieutenant from his post until about twelve o'clock when the moon should have set and darkness prevailed. If the fool disappointed him and failed to carry out his bidding, Cassio's inebriation might still serve its purpose in another way, for Montano would observe the lieutenant's weakness (his easy excitability under drink) and might be induced to report it to Othello and to advise him that it was extremely hazardous to have as his second a man with such "an ingraft infirmity." And the villain was not wrong in his calculations!

II

It was the seventh night after the no-moon night which had witnessed the secret wedding of Othello and Desdemona at Venice. The storm having cleared away, the moon shone bright and favoured the general conviviality. A little before the bell told eleven, Othello retired with Desdemona, having reminded Cassio to look to the guard with his personal eye and directed him to

call and see him early in the morning; and Cassio was about to start for the watch when Iago met him and entreated him to stay a while:

"'Tis not yet ten o' the clock. Our general cast us thus early for the love of his Desdemona, who let us not therefore blame; he hath not yet made wanton the night with her, and she is sport for Jove."

It was indeed very near eleven, but Cassio did not care to correct the manifest misstatement of his merry friend, or was himself under the influence of the single cup he had already taken. The two friends immediately entered into a jolly conversation about his general and his bewitching bride, and Iago proposed to invite "a brace of Cyprus gallants" who were waiting outside to "have a measure with him" to the health of Othello. Cassio, however, begged to be excused that night, for he had "very poor and unhappy brains for drinking," and though he had drunk but one cup that night, "and that was craftily qualified, too," it was already making such "innovation" in his head. He was "unfortunate in the infirmity and dared not task his weakness with any more." Iago, however, knew how to coax the lieutenant into compliance. "Oh, they are our friends;" said he, "but one cup: I'll drink for you." And besides, it was a night of revels and the gallants desired it.

"Where are they?" asks Cassio, half-inclined to be done with it quickly that he may go off to the watch. "Here at the door," readily replies the tempter: "I pray you, call them in." Cassio goes out to call the gallants in, but Iago had already "flustered them with flowing cups" (they were to "watch, too" and it was best to put Cassio amongst a "flock of drunkards"), and they give a "rouse" to the lieutenant before they accompany him to Iago. The merry company is now formed. Iago entertains them with pleasant talk and pleasanter songs, and glass after glass is swallowed

(Iago taking care to drink but little himself). Cassio is soon overcome with wine and himself volunteers to drink again to the health of the general. His inebriation is complete, and spurred on by his cunning friend he speaks the drunkard to the merriment of his companions. The idea of duty is, however, prominent on his brain and he feels sorry for having allowed himself to be dragged into the revelry. He makes an effort to withdraw from it and to go to his post. He reels and falls, yet rises again and endeavours to shake off his drowsiness, and finally rushes off to his place of duty, while Montano and others follow him at a slow pace. Iago cannot help appreciating his friend as "a soldier fit to stand by Cæsar and give direction" and pities him the more for his "vice"—his "ingraft infirmity" —but for which he could "watch the horologe a double set;" and he fears that "the trust Othello puts him in" might shake the island "on some odd time of his infirmity." Montano is surprised to hear this and says:

> "It were well
> The general were put in mind of it.
> Perhaps he sees it not; or his good nature
> Prizes the virtue that appears in Cassio,
> And looks not on his evils."

It is a great pity that the Moor should have such a man as his lieutenant:

> "It were an honest action to say
> So to the Moor.
> *Iago.* Not I for this fair island;
> I do love Cassio well, and would do much
> To cure him of this evil.—But, hark! what noise?"

It is some one crying out for help, and presently comes Cassio pursuing him on the point of the sword and abusing him:

"A knave teach me my duty!
I'll beat the knave into a twiggen bottle."

The "poor trash of Venice" has responded to the whip of the huntsman! While the lieutenant was rushing off to his post, Roderigo pursued him and taunted him, saying, "Fly to your duty, you drunkard!" and inebriated as he was, Cassio felt deeply insulted by the words and turned against the insolent speaker and beat him and chased him with his sword drawn.

Montano fears that Cassio, under the influence of drink, is falling foul of somebody, and interposes to stay him; but the lieutenant, beside himself with anger, resists him, and a fight ensues, in which Montano receives a dangerous wound, while Roderigo, under instructions from his counsellor, rings the castle-bell, runs out, and "cries a mutiny." Iago tries in vain to separate the combatants and keeps bawling out for help, entreating both Cassio and Montano to desist:

"Nay, good lieutenant,—alas, gentlemen!
Help, ho! Lieutenant,—Sir Montano,—
Help, masters!—Here's a goodly watch indeed!
Who's that which rings the bell?—Diablo, ho!
The town will rise; fie, fie, lieutenant, hold!
You will be sham'd for ever."

III

The brawl and the alarm rouse Othello from his nuptial bed and bring him on the scene. As he comes down, he happens to hear the earnest entreaty and warning of his good ancient (who of course meant the words for the general's hearing)—"The town will rise; fie, fie, lieutenant, hold! You will be sham'd for ever"—and he is almost convinced that the disturbance was due to Cassio's misbehaviour, and involved a most serious danger. The fight continues for a minute or

two even after Othello's arrival, and Iago repeats his entreaty :

> "Hold, ho! Lieutenant,—Sir Montano,—gentlemen !—
> Have you forgot all place of sense and duty ?
> Hold! the general speaks to you ; hold, for shame !"

A few words of stern reproof from Othello bring the fight to a close. Montano lies dangerously wounded and bleeding, and can scarcely "spare speech" to explain that he had done nothing amiss and acted but in self-defence against the violence of the lieutenant; Cassio, whom the general's presence forces to come to himself, feels overpowered with shame and cannot tell how he came to forget himself; while honest Iago looks "dead with grieving," unwilling to disclose who began the scuffle though the general charges him, on his love, to speak. Says this good soldier :

> "I cannot speak
> Any beginning to this peevish odds ;
> And would in action glorious I had lost
> Those legs that brought me to a part of it !"

No one would explain the origin of the "barbarous brawl" and Othello's blood begins to boil and passion assays to prevail over his judgment. He is altogether disappointed that Cassio, whom he treated as a personal friend and honoured by reposing the fullest trust and confidence in him as his chosen officer, should not only have failed to preserve order, but himself committed a breach of it. He feels extremely sorry that Montano, who was "wont to be civil" and whose "gravity and stillness" the world had noted, should have chosen to "unlace his reputation" and to "spend his rich opinion for the name of a night-brawler." And it was simply monstrous that, "in a town of war, yet wild, the people's hearts brimful of fear," "private and domestic quarrel" should be managed, "in night, and on

the court and guard of safety!" The general demands Iago to tell him who began the broil:

"Give me to know
How this foul rout began, who set it on,
And he that is approv'd in this offence,
Though he had twinn'd with me, both at a birth,
Shall loose me."

Iago then pretends to give an account of the affair like a true, honest soldier, but with evident reluctance as the forbearing friend of the lieutenant: and he relates it so artfully that Othello is inclined to believe that he has "minced the matter and made it light to Cassio!"

"This it is, general.
Montano and myself being in speech,
There comes a fellow crying out for help,
And Cassio following him with determin'd sword,
To execute upon him. Sir, this gentleman
Steps in to Cassio, and entreats his pause;
Myself the crying fellow did pursue,
Lest by his clamour (as it so fell out)
The town might fall in fright; he, swift of foot,
Outran my purpose, and I return'd, the rather
For that I heard the clink and fall of swords,
And Cassio high in oath, which till to-night
I ne'er might say before. When I came back
(For this was brief) I found them close together,
At blow and thrust, even as again they were
When you yourself did part them.
More of this matter cannot I report:
But men are men; the best sometimes forget.
Though Cassio did some little wrong to him,
As men in rage strike those that wish them best,
Yet surely Cassio, I believe, receiv'd
From him that fled some strange indignity,
Which patience could not pass."

Much as Othello loves Cassio as his personal friend, he cannot help pronouncing on him his stern sentence as a strict disciplinarian:

"Cassio, I love thee;
But never more be officer of mine."

Just at the moment, Desdemona, too, comes down, and Othello concludes his sentence by telling Cassio that he will make him an example and goes away with his "sweeting," having appointed Iago to "look with care about the town and silence those whom the vile brawl distracted," and having ordered Montano to be led off upstairs for dressing his wounds.

Thus has Iago compassed his rival's dismissal and his own appointment in his place: he has got through one part of his "double knavery," and the other—the so-called revenge on Othello—has yet to be accomplished. And for this, he had settled the plan even while at Venice and it will serve at once to confirm the dismissal of Cassio and destroy the wedded bliss of the Moor! He should befriend Cassio in his trouble and advise him to seek Desdemona's intercession, and he should afterwards "abuse Othello's ear that he is too familiar with his wife."

IV

Cassio's intoxication was too strong to pass off in an hour's time, yet when he was provoked by a taunt which touched a vital point of his character, viz., his devotion to duty, it gave place to "the devil wrath" which landed him in a shameful scuffle. But he could not know who it was that had insulted him, or what he had said or done to him (Iago took care to ascertain this): he afterwards remembered "a mass of things, but nothing distinctly; a quarrel, but nothing wherefore." Othello's arrival on the scene suspended the intoxication still better and overwhelmed the lieutenant with a feeling of shame. The dismissal which followed "recovered" him to the full possession of his sense, and no sooner had the general departed than the unfortunate victim

sank to the ground, thoroughly undone by the blow and disgusted with himself.

The poor man was indeed hurt "past all surgery:" he had lost his reputation—"the immortal part" of himself—and "what remained was bestial." And notwithstanding Iago's philosophy that reputation was "an idle and most false imposition, oft got without merit and lost without deserving" and his assurance that there were many ways "to recover the general again" and that he had cast him but in his angry mood, "more in policy than in malice," Cassio would "rather sue to be despised than to deceive so good a commander with so slight, so drunken, and so indiscreet an officer:" and he "frankly despised himself" for having put an enemy into his mouth to steal away his brains.

Iago heartily wished that as the time, the place, and the condition of the country stood, the lieutenant had not committed any fault, but as it was, he would advise him to mend it for his good. But how? Cassio would ask the general for his place again: he would be told he was a drunkard, and if he had as many mouths as Hydra, such an answer would stop them all! The good lieutenant was sorely grieved for having transformed himself into a beast; he cursed all wine as unblest and thought that the very devil was the ingredient of "every inordinate cup." He would fain mend his reputation, but there was no way of doing it.

But why should the lieutenant despair when he had a sincere, loving friend like Iago to console him with his words and help him with his counsel?

"You or any man living may be drunk at a time, man. I 'll tell you what you shall do. Our general's wife is now the general; I may say so in this respect, for that he hath devoted and given up himself to the contemplation, mark, and denotement of her parts and graces. Confess yourself freely to her; importune her help to put you in your place again. She is of so free, so kind, so apt, so blessed a disposition, she holds it a

vice in her goodness not to do more than she is requested. This broken joint between you and her husband entreat her to splinter; and, my fortunes against any lay worth naming, this crack of your love shall grow stronger than it was before."

Excellent advice, surely, given "in the sincerity of love and honest kindness!" And betimes in the morning, the dismissed lieutenant would "beseech the virtuous Desdemona" to plead his cause with Othello. Yes, that was the course to pursue: Desdemona must mediate for him with her lord. It was settled, and Iago bade good night to his friend, as it was very near one o'clock and he must proceed to the watch.

"She is of so free, so kind, so apt, so blessed a disposition"—this from Iago's mouth! The last was Roderigo's phrase which Iago had laughed to scorn, but it was ringing in his ears since evening, and he had promised himself, more than once since then, the triumph of employing the virtues of Desdemona to work her husband's ruin and her own. Cassio was quite as credulous and unsuspecting as the general and his wife whom the lieutenant had praised as "perfection:" and it was no difficult task to get the cashiered man to solicit the kind lady's intercession, nor any unlikely thing that she should interest herself in his behalf. And who could deny it was the very best course to win the Moor whose soul was simply "enfetter'd to her love?" Who could read in Iago's "free" and "honest" advice his villanous intention of turning the lady's "virtue into pitch"—of misinterpreting her kind pleading for Cassio so as to "undo her credit with the Moor?" Now that Cassio has readily fallen in with his advice, the devil stands amazed at the divine appearance he could put on and contemplates the "divinity of hell"—the heavenly character hell could assume—with satisfaction and delight! and with almost audible chuckle gloats over the glory which awaits him!

"And what's he then that says I play the villain?
When this advice is free I give and honest,
Probal to thinking, and indeed the course
To win the Moor again? For 't is most easy
The inclining Desdemona to subdue
In any honest suit; she 's fram'd as fruitful
As the free elements. And then for her
To win the Moor—were 't to renounce his baptism,
All seals and symbols of redeemed sin,
His soul is so enfetter'd to her love,
That she may make, unmake, do what she list,
Even as her appetite shall play the god
With his weak function. How am I then a villain
To counsel Cassio to this parallel course,
Directly to his good? Divinity of hell!
When devils will the blackest sins put on,
They do suggest at first with heavenly shows,
As I do now: for whiles this honest fool
Plies Desdemona to repair his fortunes,
And she for him pleads strongly to the Moor,
I'll pour this pestilence into his ear,—
That she repeals him for her body's lust;
And by how much she strives to do him good,
She shall undo her credit with the Moor.
So will I turn her virtue into pitch,
And out of her own goodness make the net
That shall enmesh them all."

V

After faithfully carrying out the directions of his friend and adviser, Roderigo went to his post on the guard and watched there till morning. Iago came to him once or twice on his rounds and told him that Cassio had been cashiered and their project was on the high road to success, but nothing further. Roderigo had reluctantly undertaken and caused provocation to Cassio, at the advice and under the pressure of Iago, but he could not believe that thereby he was now in a better position to gain his object. Rather, it seemed to him, after a little calm thought, that he had made a fool of himself and followed "in the chase, not like a hound that hunts, but one that fills up the cry." So far, he

had got nothing for his pains but a sound cudgelling while Iago stepped into the shoes of the lieutenant! It was clear that Iago had made a tool of him for his own purposes, and he must be content to return to Venice "with no money at all and a little more wit." In this state of mind, he went to his good friend on the watch as soon as the bell rang for the discharge of the guard, and poured forth his complaint. Iago rebuked him for his impatience and begged him to be content for a while, now he had gained an advantage over his rival:

> "How poor are they that have not patience!
> What wound did ever heal but by degrees?
> Thou know'st we work by wit and not by witchcraft,
> And wit depends on dilatory time.
> Does 't not go well? Cassio hath beaten thee,
> And thou, by that small hurt, hast cashier'd Cassio.
> Though other things grow fair against the sun,
> Yet fruits that blossom first will first be ripe;
> Content thyself awhile.—In troth, 't is morning;
> Pleasure and action make the hours seem short.
> Retire thee; go where thou art billeted."

Roderigo was not however satisfied with this mystic explanation. He could not think that Cassio's dismissal was really a step towards the success of his project and he lingered to learn something clearer and more hopeful. Iago again told him to go away, promising that he should "know more hereafter;" but the poor man was still unwilling to move his legs. "Nay, get thee gone," repeated Iago: and he was gone, leaving his friend to reflect on what he had to do immediately.

> "Two things are to be done:
> My wife must move for Cassio to her mistress;
> I'll set her on:
> Myself awhile to draw the Moor apart,
> And bring him jump when he may Cassio find
> Soliciting his wife.—Ay, that 's the way:
> Dull not device by coldness and delay."

CHAPTER VI

THE MESSAGE TO VENICE

I

As soon as Cassio's gloom and despondency were relieved by the hope, which the ancient discovered to him, of regaining the general's favour and repairing the reputation that was injured, he retired to his lodging and relapsed into his former inebriate condition, to waken just in time to conduct the musicians, he had bespoken the previous night, for playing their morning song to the new-married couple. Cassio loved Othello and reverenced his beautiful bride, the divine Desdemona; and the general's severe sentence did not in any degree abate his love and good wishes for the happiness of the pair. And he hoped forthwith to see the good lady and solicit her kind intercession with her lord.

Othello and Desdemona had not enjoyed much of rest during the night. In the evening, soon after their arrival at the castle, the loving wife had narrated, to her lord's great surprise, all about her father's kindness, and assured him, too, of his reconciliation; and she unpacked her boxes and revealed quite a rich queen's paraphernalia! When all her favourite things were arranged in the hall, with her old father's portrait casting a kind look of benediction on the lovers, Othello felt as if he was destined to go mad with the exuberance of his joy. "O my fair warrior-queen!" exclaimed the transported hero to his bride, as they sat together on a divan, "what spells are yours that you have subdued even your irate father to your will? What charms did

you employ to vanquish me and make me your slave, what witchcraft made the Duke your solicitor, and what enchantment converted the furious winds and waters into your faithful friends? Oh, by what divine grace have you saved us all from the watery grave which has swallowed our enemies?" The fairy angel threw her arms around him and pressed him to her bosom and she silenced him with a sweet shower of loving kisses!

Desdemona prayed to be told how her lord had fared during the voyage, but Othello postponed the narration to a future day, for it was a long and dreadful tale and would take many days to tell. He however related to her just a little about the hopeless hours he had passed, and the prayers he had said the previous night, and the orphaned girl wept for joy, and shivered, and almost swooned. How merciful the gods were to her! She would nevermore in life be away from her dear lord.

After the alarm which roused Othello and Desdemona, the bridal pair had not much of sleep, for they were taking of Cassio for a long while, and Othello got up from bed a couple of hours before daybreak, to write letters to the Duke and the Senate. And he had not quite finished these when the musicians played their morning song in a loud key and disturbed his writing and awoke the sleeping bride.

"It's our good Cassio's friendly greeting," observed Desdemona, as she approached the desk of her lord.

"Yes, I know it," replied Othello, and he called the Clown and gave him a piece of gold, saying, "Put this in their hands and dismiss them. And tell Iago to see me presently, and let him send word to the gentlemen in charge of the fortifications to wait upon me."

"And are you reporting to the Senate, my lord, about Cassio?" enquired Desdemona in a tone of friendly anxiety.

"Yes, my honey," replied Othello, "I think I shall add a line about it."

"Pardon me, my lord," rejoined Desdemona, "it is making a mountain of a molehill to magnify a mishap into a crime and ruin a good man for ever. Forgive him, love, and take him back; he has been so faithful in his service and so good."

"Be it, darling, even as you say," replied Othello, after a little reflection, "but not so soon; for he that has been hurt is of great fame in Cyprus and great affinity, and I could not but refuse Cassio in wholesome wisdom; but I assure you I love him and need no other suitor but my likings to take the safest occasion by the front to bring him in again. I will not write anything about him then to the Senate, just now." And he closed the letters and ran into the embrace of his bride before going into the drawing-room to meet Iago and the gentlemen he had sent for.

Iago, let us note, went to Cassio's lodging as soon as the guard was dismissed at daybreak, and was surprised to find that his friend had been quite brisk about his business and had already gone to the castle, without any reminder from him, and even sent word to Emilia (by the Clown, entreating "a little favour of speech") with a view to request her to procure him an interview with Desdemona.

"You have not been a-bed, then?" enquired Iago of Cassio whom he met directly at the castle.

"Why, no; the day had broke before we parted," replied the awakened man to whom the interval of his relapse into inebriety had no duration!

The good friend very kindly undertook not only to send Emilia to him presently, but to "devise a mean to draw the Moor out of the way" that his converse and business might be more free. How could Cassio help

feeling that he had never known even "a Florentine more kind and honest!"

Almost immediately afterwards, Iago went to the general and was entrusted with the letters he had written, to be given to the pilot who was to set out with them at once for Venice; and Othello repaired to see the fortifications, having directed the acting lieutenant to meet him there "on the works."

II

The ship proceeds at a happy speed, neither thwarted by adverse winds nor swept on by storm and tempest. She must run the usual course of fourteen days before she can reach Venice with the happy tidings of the Turks' destruction.

Fly we to Brabantio's home and learn how the old father is bearing the daughter's separation. Alas! alas! that palatial mansion is closed! It wears mourning on every side and spreads dark shadows on every hearth in the city! The old senator is no more! Oh, innocent Desdemona! Art thou enjoying connubial bliss at the very grave of thy good father! Oh, mockery of life's blindness! Oh, heavy punishment!

Brabantio never rose from the bed to which he retired on the morning of Desdemona's departure from Venice. He had done the last act of kindness to his child and bade his final farewell to her; and there was nothing before him but the bitterest emptiness, nought but a most dreadful gulf which yawned to swallow him. No one was aware of the depth of his agony; none could suspect his end was so near. It was not until evening that his serious condition was known even to his brother, and the Duke and the senators called to see their good old friend and councillor. He stared a

wild and piteous look at every one: there was something he wished to say, but his voice failed him. He beckoned to Gratiano, placed his feeble hand in his, and struggled hard for utterance. Tears welled forth from every eye. Every ear listened with eagerness. But a weak whisper, nothing more!—"Is she gone?" "Yes, brother," answered Gratiano, and the old man's soul flew away to the dear daughter! One more glance at the faces present, and his eyes spoke their last adieu and dropped the curtains. The broken heart ceased its beat and the blood-red sun vanished into the western sea.

The sorrowful news spread through the city with the darkness of the night. The heavens put on gloom to mourn the death of the good senator and wept tears. A most furious tempest raged far off on the sea and its moans were heard in Venice! What hope was there for the Venetian ships which were sailing to Cyprus? This was the question on every one's lips and every soul felt the marks of divine resentment. Everybody condemned the hasty sacrifice which the Senate had made even of a divine angel.

What woman in Venice could grant that gentle Desdemona had given her hand to the Moor with her free consent? What girl could believe that she had not been inveigled unawares into the secret wedding? Who could think she had not been wrought upon with drugs and charms, and who had not heard of such things? Yet, the sage senators, at a sudden meeting on a sleepless night, had summarily settled a most serious matter and sacrificed a simple maiden, and sent her father to the grave! They had brought sin and scourge on the state, and nothing strange if their ships should all be swept away by the storm and they should soon hear that the Turks had taken possession of Cyprus. Every one felt certain that the Senate's decision would have

been different if the urgency had not arisen that night for Othello's services.

" But the girl was so positive in her choice and so bold in her decision to accompany the Moor!" said the Duke to his wife and daughter, who supported the popular opinion.

" Just so!" replied the wife, " and what better proof could there be that she had been drugged and charmed? Oh, there be drugs and powders, I have heard, more potent than the most powerful loadstones: they don't let the poor victim turn right or left to any one, however near and dear."

" And how, indeed, could you believe, father," asked the daughter, " that Desdemona, of all girls, could have spoken so to her good parent or stepped out from under his roof but for charms and spells?"

" Or desired to follow her lord to the wars!" added the Duchess: " my goodness! that was a strange meeting of your Senate which swallowed such silly stuff and sanctioned a seducer's scheme!"

The Duke listened to the sweet voices and realised he had been overhasty in the disposal of the matter, for he might very well have postponed his decision until Othello's return from the wars and ordered Desdemona back to her home. But he trusted he had committed no error and hoped the popular feeling would soon give place to reason.

Ugly revelations rapidly came to light regarding the Moor's character. Many men and many women had noted the secret visits of Emilia to him, at odd hours of day and night, and scandal was already current in the city about their intimacy. The Duke and senators were indeed surprised and sorry to hear this about their good general, but they could not believe it though the testimony was so strong. And then, a gondolier swore

that Emilia had escorted the lady to the Sagittary at that midnight hour, and it came out, too, that she had of late been paying almost daily visits to her mistress! Who could say what condiments she had not innocently carried to the girl from the Moor? Everything pointed to foul play and suspicion and threw discredit on the "round, unvarnish'd tale," which the Moor had professed to give, of his whole course of love. Still, the Duke and senators and a few others could not think ill of their worthy general, whose nobility and solid virtue they were well aware of: they could not think him guilty of anything dishonourable.

Public opinion, however, grew strong against the Moor: not that he was a foreigner whose marriage with a damsel of Venice should be null and void, but the conviction gained ground that he had subdued the maid's affections "by indirect and forcèd courses" and not by fair, open, and honourable wooing and solicitation. With one voice, the whole city mourned the sad death of the good, old senator, who was beloved of all, and every mouth predicted ill luck and calamity to the state unless the general was called back and Desdemona restored to the desolate home of her dead father.

The Senate then met and resolved in deference to public opinion, the "sovereign mistress of effects." They decided that, as soon as they should get the first message from Cyprus, Othello should be politely recalled, for the trial *de novo* of the charge which had been preferred against him in respect of his marriage; Cassio should be appointed in his place; Gratiano and Lodovico should proceed in charge of the errand; and Othello should be ordered, notwithstanding the previous decision of the Senate, or any inviolable rights he might assert, or the damsel's own wish and inclination to the contrary, forthwith to commit and entrust Desdemona

to the care and guardianship of her uncle, Gratiano, and further should be warned "not to fail to do this" on any pretext whatsoever. And prayers were offered in every home for the safety of the Venetian ships and their safe landing at the port of Cyprus.

Fair weather set in after a week; and two weeks more brought the welcome message from Cyprus, to the immense surprise and delight of every one. The Venetian ships had reached their destination after a voyage of but seven days! The Turkish fleet had been drowned! The island was secure from all danger and there was no prospect of any renewal of the enemy's attack. The general would all the same proceed to repair the fortifications and to strengthen the defences. Ah, what happy tidings! People thought it significant that Venice did not owe this victory to the great general whose glory was soon to set! Who could doubt, they said, it was heaven's merciful response to the prayers of the people?

In a couple of hours, Gratiano and Lodovico set out for Cyprus on their special mission, and large crowds of people gathered on the shore to see them off.

CHAPTER VII

FOUR WEEKS IN CYPRUS

I

FLY back to Cyprus, dear reader, on the wings of imagination and learn how the noble Moor and his gentle lady have been faring there these two weeks that have elapsed since their landing. Note, too, their life-web for two weeks longer while the commission from Venice is still on the way, and mark at last how cruel fate shears off the threads in a single day and leads to a conflagration of souls! Come, swan of Avon! tell us the prelude to thy tragic song and reveal the mysteries of thy master art.

The morning after landing, Othello was very busy inspecting the fortifications and putting in hand the execution of such repairs and improvements as were necessary to keep the port in "warlike brace." Iago went to him from the harbour, after delivering the letters to the pilot, and both the general and the lieutenant returned home rather late.

Thanks to Iago and his wife, Cassio had a pretty long interview that morning with Desdemona, and expressed to her his penitence for the fault he had been led into and promised he should never be guilty of a repetition of it in his life. He was rejoiced to learn that the generous lady had already pleaded his cause even without his solicitation, that the general loved him despite his delinquency and would take him back into service in good time, and that he had no choice but to visit him with his present dismissal, owing to the position and

fame of the person who had been rather badly wounded in the scuffle. Cassio was quite satisfied with this assurance and felt comforted in the extreme: he loved the general and his good lady more than ever and prayed for their happiness. And he was thoroughly ashamed of himself for his transgression.

Iago felt completely mortified that Cassio had finished his interview long before the general returned to the castle, and his device of bringing the Moor "jump where he might Cassio find soliciting his wife" had been defeated and could not be thought of again, at least for a week. The dismissed officer had been told to wait and for good reasons, and he could not very well be advised to renew his petition so soon. But the worst of it was, Iago had to wait, too! He had that very morning preached a lesson on patience to his dupe, and he was required to follow it himself!

> "How poor are they that have not patience!
> What wound did ever heal but by degrees!
> Thou know'st we work by wit and not by witchcraft,
> And wit depends on dilatory time."

Yes, even Iago's wit required time to help it into a manifestation of results! And he *must* wear patience, much as it might gall him every moment to think that his wit had so far only helped his enemies—that he had provided a bride to one, and given real beneficial advice to another to regain his appointment! Oh, the irony of it! Was it going to end in his utter discomfiture? It was some little consolation that Cassio would not be restored to office before Montano's wounds were healed and he was able to move about.

If Iago had not met with this initial disappointment, if he had been able to bring his general to the castle pat at Cassio's very first interview with Desdemona, it is not likely that his scheme would have led to the

awful catastrophe it actually produced in the event. He might, indeed, have puzzled the general with a covert exclamation about Cassio's courteous attentions to the lady, linked them, too, with observations on their mutual behaviour the previous evening immediately after landing, invented perhaps a few confessions which came out during his inebriate mood over night, and suggested the danger of too free intimacy with an avowed libertine of fair looks and pleasing manners, yea, the likelihood of lecherous thoughts and foul desires; he might even have pretended to learn about Cassio's mediation with surprise, and thrown suspicion on the past: but he could not have spoken (as he did four weeks later) to any sleep-talk of his friend, or any confessions of acts, either previous to the marriage, for he had himself promoted the last stages of it, or subsequent to that event, as but a single night had yet elapsed since landing. At the worst, the villain might have endeavoured to put the Moor "into a jealousy so strong that judgment could not cure," but he would very likely have failed in it, for the Moor's was not a nature that could long "make a life of jealousy." The fate which watched the destiny of the bridal couple did not, however, permit its agent to strike a bad or hasty blow, and it forced him to wait for a sure opportunity, even to his chagrin and vexation.

There was thanksgiving in the evening and the church was packed to suffocation: so many were attracted both by the joyous occasion and the rare pleasure of feasting their eyes on the divine beauty that was amidst them. And they were vouchsafed the additional delight, they had not counted on, of listening to the sweet melody of Desdemona's mellow voice. Every one admired her perfect simplicity and fancied she was heaven's own messenger to them and herald of happy tidings. And as her fairy form floated in the limpid moonlight and

glided away towards the castle, arm in arm with her beloved lord, no one could believe she was not indeed a divine angel!

But one person there was who felt altogether miserable that happy evening. It was Iago, the devil's own next of kin. The anguish of his evil soul, awakened by the sight of happiness in others, was intensified by the reflection that it was self-induced; and no expectation or assurance of future triumph could relieve it in any measure. He realised, indeed, that he had to pay quite as dearly for his soul's pastime and delight as anybody else! and oh, by what mortal agony on occasions! It bit him to observe that even Cassio could put on a happy countenance. Well— it might not be a bad job, he thought, to accompany him to Bianca's that night and pass a merry hour there (he might turn it to some account) and Cassio was very glad to take him to his mistress and acknowledge before her the kind and unselfish services of the good friend and his wife.

II

During the whole of that first week, both Othello and Iago had tight work to do, of one kind or another; and the new lieutenant realised it was no mere honorary office he had stepped into. With all, the general did not omit to see Montano, off and on, and sent his lieutenant at times to ascertain the progress he was making. Fair visitors poured into the castle every afternoon to see the general's bride, and returned home immensely pleased with the attentions they received from the kind lady as well as her good maid.

The second week which began with the full moon, and the third which closed with the no-moon night, witnessed several merry gatherings in the homes of the

gentry, and in all, Desdemona was the centre of attraction. Everywhere, she was loved for her amiable disposition and her noble qualities. She sang and played and danced, to the great delight and admiration of every one, and she was so simple and unassuming, so "free of speech" yet of "so gentle a condition," so kind-hearted and sympathetic to all, that she was looked up to as the pattern for everything, both by the young and the old.

Othello and Desdemona freely worked their felicity amidst such happy surroundings. The Moor might indeed have felt that he was the special favourite of heaven. Such a fine, lovely angel; such an "admirable musician" who could "sing the savageness out of a bear" and "of so high and plenteous wit and invention;" such a busy housewife, "so delicate with her needle;" such a sweet, loving creature who "might lie by an emperor's side and command him tasks;"—what wonder if the Moor greeted her every day as his "fair warrior," adored her, and felt proud of her, and rejoiced that she had already "found great love" amongst the people of the place and was the "cynosure" of all eyes, at the beach, in the church, and everywhere! What wonder if he "garner'd up" his heart in her and realised her as the place where he must either "live or bear no life"—"the fountain from which his current should run or else dry up!" What wonder if his very soul was "enfetter'd to her love!" Indeed, he gave himself up in his leisure to the "contemplation, mark, and denotement of her parts and graces." Yet he never "scanted" his "serious and great business;" neither would the devoted wife permit him to swerve from that high principle —'duty before pleasure.' There was nothing wanting to perfect their bliss, except the reconciliation of the good father. Desdemona's heart yearned for his kind

words and blessing, and when her lord told her they might go back to Venice at no distant day, that all arrangements in the island were completed and his presence was no longer required, that he was writing so to the Senate and expected they would soon order his return, the fond creature was struck mute with joy and could only speak by tears: she pinned her face to the heart of her lord and hid her lovely eyes, and the loving husband took her up tenderly and devoured the dewy orbs!

Emilia bored her husband every night with the account of her mistress's laudations and the unique bliss she was enjoying in the company of her noble lord. The loving maid was elated to think that the union had been brought about by her own and her husband's efforts, and presumed he would be delighted to hear of the happiness it had led to; but, to her infinite surprise, the whimsical man turned against her and tormented her!

"Then you may as well live with him as his mistress if you like him and love him so very much," taunted the unkind husband, one night: "I know it, I have heard of it already. It is my own——"

"What is it you know or have heard?" asked the innocent wife with an angry stare, and she threw away the work in her hands and stood still.

"Will you swear?" demanded the husband, "Will you swear the general has not——"

"I will swear," roared out Emilia before the question was asked, "I will swear you are gone mad or some wicked villain has turned your wit the seamy side without. Oh, fie! to delight in silly slander and to kill me for nothing!"

Indeed, Iago never allowed Emilia any peace, and never was pleased with her for anything. He never

"used" her well, but found fault with her for one thing and another, chid her, abused her, oft "broke out in peevish jealousies" and "threw restraint" or her, and at times "struck" her! He extolled other women—even courtesans—to her face and told her she was the most undeserving wife in creation. He tantalised her by showing gold and jewels, but never gave her any (he evidently "poured the treasures into foreign laps"). He was never liberal in the pin-money he allowed her and latterly "scanted her former having in despite." He called her "a foolish wife," a dunderhead, and what not, and though she patiently bore all his ill-treatment and abuse, he spoke of her to others as a tremendous termagant whose tongue controlled him completely! His biddings were not always to her liking, but sometimes he commanded her, sometimes coaxed her, into doing them. He had allowed her no rest until she persuaded Desdemona into the secret wedding with his general, yet now when she spoke of their married bliss, he suspected her with the Moor! He extolled his friend Cassio and mourned his misfortune as his own and strictly commanded her never to deny him an interview with her mistress, yet if she volunteered any good news which concerned him, or said the general was sure to take him back, she was charged with lusting for the welcome company of the man of good looks! And he has been telling her these three weeks to steal her mistress's handkerchief—"her first remembrance from the Moor," which he had conjured her ever to keep about her. She did not know why he wanted the "trifle," but he bothered her for it so often and with "such solemn earnestness" she was feeling quite puzzled as to how she could purchase his peace without doing a wrong to her beloved lady. Oh, the wayward husband! the poor woman had such bitter experience of him these

seven or eight months, she realised the sad truth—

> "'Tis not a year or two shows us a man:
> They are all but stomachs, and we all but food;
> They eat us hungerly, and when they are full
> They belch us."

III

Iago's patience was well-nigh exhausted by the end of the third week. He had advised Cassio to pay another visit to Desdemona, for it would not do to allow his restoration to lie over, especially as Montano's wounds were almost healed and he would soon be able to go about. And though it was not now very easy to find an opportunity even for a "brief discourse with Desdemona 'lone," Emilia managed to arrange an interview for Cassio, and he did see the lady and receive a reassurance of his speedly reappointment: Desdemona had reported the last interview to her lord and had spoken to him several times subsequently about the matter, and had received the promise that Cassio should very soon be taken back. And Cassio had no reason whatever to be ill at ease.

The real purpose of the interview was, however, defeated, for Iago could not get the general (who was busy at the harbour) to return to the castle at the right moment. How could the demon bear this double disappointment (his advice had again resulted in the advantage of his enemy!) and what avail was it that every time he went to see Montano, he took care to prejudice him against Cassio (of course by praising him and pleading his cause!) and even felt certain he had hinted to Othello against the reinstatement of the dismissed officer? The general evidently had a will of his own, and it looked as if the acting lieutenant must soon eat humble-pie and hold the ancient's flag!

The pain of this perplexity and uncertainty was accentuated by that tool of doubtful utility—Roderigo. He began to pester his friend now, every other day, about the delay which had occured, and would not be satisfied with the hope that was shown still to exist or with the explanation, that was given him, of the exact situation. He had already been told that Cassio's removal was absolutely necessary for the success of their scheme, and they had luckily secured his dismissal, but the man had regained the general's favour through the intervention of Desdemana (whose favourite he was, of course) and it seemed likely he would soon be taken back into service. This must not be, for unless they prevented his reappointment, there could be "no expectation of their prosperity."

"But how could we prevent it?" asked the despairing dupe who was not unwilling to place faith in the conclusions of his wise friend.

"Well, it were easy enough to do," explained Iago, "if only you could find mettle enough in you, to-night, to ring the castle-bell, run out, and cry a mutiny, even as you did on the night of our landing here, exactly three weeks this day. I will put you in the guard and shall be on the watch, of course, as usual. You need provoke nobody nor run any risk of being cudgelled!"

"Yes, I will do it," replied the emboldened fool, after a little cogitation.

"And I warrant you," assured the friend, "we shall be at the winning-post ere the week goes round."

All praise to Roderigo, he proved as good as his word that night. The alarm which he sounded threw the town into a wild fright and confusion, and the general and his lieutenant had much to do to restore order and tranquillity. Neither of them could discover the cause of the disturbance (some vile conspiracy was probably

brewing in the place, they feared,) but Iago suggested, and Othello accepted it as a wise suggestion, that, for a week or two, both of them should watch together on the court of guard.

IV

The fourth week began rather auspiciously for Iago. Othello would watch with him on the court of guard, from midnight until daybreak, and if he could be taken out for a little while afterwards, Cassio would have a splendid opportunity for visiting Desdemona early in the morning (Emilia would of course quickly arrange the interview).

But Cassio should be ready on the spot, to proceed to the castle immediately he got a message from Iago that the general was going out. Yes, he had better sleep in his own lodging for a week or ten days and not go at all to his mistress. And by Jove! it was a fine idea, if things went according to calculation: it would be a nice bit of evidence—the favourite's keeping away from his mistress when the general was on the watch!—and it would serve, too, to upset the peace of that pretty pussy, the proud Bianca!

So the friend in need advised the man in trouble to bid goodbye to his mistress and keep away from her for a few days, until his restoration was secured; and he asserted that his free life in that respect had something to do with the delay, for it was strange he should still be kept from his post although Montano's wounds were all healed and he was going about. Cassio thanked Iago for his sincere advice and acted accordingly; and the very next morning, he had the pleasure of seeing Desdemona and learning that the general would take him back in two or three days.

Oh, misery unbearable! With the third disappointment which had befallen him, Iago lost all faith in the feasibility of his plan. *Two or three days!* and how could he advise another interview, and where was the use of it? Some other device must be discovered to bring Cassio again into trouble, and Iago had a remote thought of it already. He would however tell his friend not to count his chickens before they were hatched, for promises were not performances, and it were best for him to keep away from his mistress until his reappointment was a *fait accompli*.

Would the reader find it hard to realise, or difficult to believe, that Iago went straightway to Bianca's that evening (he had already visited her twice or thrice during the three weeks) and had a long chat with her about men and women, and praised her and flattered her and returned home, having, in token of his brotherly love and regard for her, presented her a brooch?—(it bore Roderigo's crest and monogram!) He had long been thinking of giving her the trifle, but feared his friend might miscontrue the gift, and even now he begged her not to mention it to him.

Iago's agony was now somewhat abated. It would be a fine feat, he thought, to sow suspicion in Cassio's mind against Roderigo, for, if he should knock out the fellow's brains, Iago would be rid of a pest and Cassio would get into trouble! And it might be worth while visiting the Veronese wench again, after three or four days, to unsettle her mind about her lover's absence: the drab had of late been rather dashing in her delectation (she even dared to display herself on the beach!), it was time she was parted from her petted paramour.

Cassio was however spared the torture of the "green-ey'd monster." Three days elapsed since he received the last assurance from Desdemona, but he was still a

dismissed man. The week drew to a close, but the promised restoration was yet to be, and he lost all hope and mirth, and grew impatient. He resolved he should not be delayed any longer. He would make a final request, and even solicit the lady to remind the general of his love and service, and if, withal, his offence was considered unpardonable, he would "shut himself up in some other course to fortune's alms." So he begged Iago for the favour of a final interview with Desdemona, and the good friend was of course only too glad to create an opportunity. And fate which, for four weeks, had frustrated the design of its minister, now helped it on to a sure and speedy execution.

CHAPTER VIII

THE LAST DAY

I

It was Sunday. The morning dawned in gaiety and sent forth a welcome greeting to the people. The sun shone bright and cheerful and promised a pleasant day to all, and a happy hour that noon at the castle to the "generous islanders" whom Othello had invited to dinner. Not a cloud was visible in the heavens, far or near, nor anywhere a signal of an approaching earthquake or explosion.

For seven nights, Othello had foregone the happy company of Desdemona and joined Iago on the watch. Some wicked conspiracy, some yet "unhatch'd practice" (the general explained to his fair warrior) must lie at the bottom of that alarm on the no-moon night, and it should be detected with vigilance and nipped in the bud. Cassio would have been extremely helpful to him at this critical hour: still his restoration must be put off some time longer, for, possibly, the trouble had arisen from the hint the general had given to Montano, just the other day, of his decision to take back the dismissed officer. Anyhow, he must quit the bed of his bride for a few nights and join the watch, and discover the cause of the disturbance, if possible. And Desdemona was not the wife to keep her lord with her to the detriment of his "serious business."

On the watch, the general and his assistant had occasionally talked of Cassio, and, Iago, of course, was in favour of his friend's restoration: for whatever his

faults and failings, said the *locum tenens,* Cassio was an officer of quite unequalled ability, unsurpassed in his vigilance and indispensable at a critical time.

"But, is it possible," the general asked, "there is any feeling here against his reappointment?"

"I cannot think it," replied the candid man, "though the other evening at the beach, I did overhear some one decry him as a fine fellow fit for ladies' company and nothing better. But even in this, he has turned over a new leaf: he has slept at his own lodgings, I know, since Sunday last, and has been keeping away from his mistress altogether."

"Sure," said the general, "we cannot afford to do away with such a good officer, for ever."

That deceitful morning, Othello and his lieutenant went out soon after the watch and did not return to the castle for two or three hours; and Cassio had a fine opportunity for a long interview with Desdemona, which the kind lady did not grudge despite she was pressed with arrangements for the reception of the guests, and the dinner which was nearing. She told him that his restoration was a foregone conclusion, though now it had to be postponed a little while longer on account of the recent disturbance, and assured him of her lord's friendly attitude:

> "Be you well assur'd
> He shall in strangeness stand no further off
> Than in a politic distance."

Cassio was not, however, satisfied with this assurance, for that policy, on which he was being kept out of his post, might be continued on slight and fanciful grounds, or its importance might be magnified by every accident and circumstance:

> "Ay, but, lady,
> That policy may either last so long,

Or feed upon such nice and waterish diet,
Or breed itself so out of circumstances,
That, I being absent and my place supplied,
My general will forget my love and service."

Desdemona felt touched by this appeal which the dismissed man made, referring to his love and services. He had already hinted it in a more general way:

"Bounteous madam,
Whatever shall become of Michael Cassio,
He's never anything but your true servant;"

and Desdemona had acknowledged it with thanks:

"I know't; I thank you. You do love my lord."

But the re-allusion to his "love and *service*" touched a tender chord in her heart, for Desdemona well remembered how very much her decision in favour of the Moor's alliance was influenced by the good friend's persistent and disinterested advocacy. She knew that Cassio would not have made the reference but as a last appeal in his dejected state of doubt and helplessness, and she pitied him and repeated her assurance with a tenfold pledge of certainty:

"Do not doubt that; before Emilia here
I give thee warrant of thy place. Assure thee,
If I do vow a friendship, I 'll perform it
To the last article: my lord shall never rest;
I 'll watch him tame and talk him out of patience;
His bed shall seem a school, his board a shrift;
I 'll intermingle every thing he does
With Cassio's suit. Therefore be merry, Cassio;
For thy solicitor shall rather die
Than give thy cause away."

The advent of Othello on the scene put an end to the interview, for Cassio would not stay to hear his solicitor plead his cause. He was so ashamed of facing his general—so "very ill at ease" and "unfit for his own purposes"—he was content to take leave of Desdemona

and made a hurried exit by the side door, quite humbled and put out of countenance; not, however, before the general, and the lieutenant who followed him, caught sight of his figure. Fate played at last into the hands of the villain, and a short, involuntary exclamation, artfully muttered by him in a low tone, sufficed to kindle a spark of suspicion in Othello's soul and led to a direful destruction of human lives before the dawning of another day.

> "*Iago*. Ha! I like not that.
> *Oth*. What dost thou say?
> *Iago*. Nothing, my lord: or if——I know not what.
> *Oth*. Was not that Cassio parted from my wife?
> *Iago*. Cassio, my lord! No, sure, I cannot think it,
> That he would steal away so guilty-like,
> Seeing your coming.
> *Oth*. I do believe 'twas he."

II

At the moment of landing in Cyprus, Othello indeed felt he had reached the pinnacle of earthly bliss, and his soul had "her content so absolute he feared that not another comfort" like to it might succeed "in unknown fate;" and he even gave expression to his fear, in those ominous words whose evil import the loving bride quickly warded off with a good wish:

> "*Oth*. If it were now to die,
> 'Twere now to be most happy.
> * * * * * *
> *Des*. The heavens forbid
> But that our loves and comforts should increase
> Even as our days do grow."

And their bliss did grow during the four weeks which elapsed before the coming of the evil day. They had been a whole word to each other, and Othello simply worshipped the angel whose tender love and devotion

had begum a new epoch in his life. Did ever any doubt enter into his mind regarding the purity of that love, did any apprehension disquiet him concerning the whole-souled perfection of that devotion? Did he ever build himself any trouble upon his own "weak merits," or the high encomiums his bride received in Cyprus society, or the freedom with which she "spoke and sang and played and danced?" Oh, no! "She had eyes and chose him," and he was by no means of a jealous disposition. The impression of her inviolable purity had become part and parcel of his very nature, or he should not have loved her and married her, or entrusted her to the escort of Iago during the voyage from Venice. True, her father had uttered an unkind curse on parting, which struck him as somewhat strange and sank deep into his heart:

> "Look to her, Moor, if thou hast eyes to see;
> She has deceiv'd her father, and may thee."

But he had regarded those cruel words as the outcome of the old man's prejudice and passion and obliterated them from his memory: and, since the day of landing when he learnt about his subsequent kindness, he had even accepted the unhappy utterance as the measure of the father's unbounded love for his only daughter and his bitter disappointment at being suddenly deprived of her. Never afterwards did those bitter words rise up in the recollection of Othello, or disturb the smooth current of his full and perfect happiness, until the covert exclamation of the evil one caught his ear unawares and arrested the tide of that bliss, almost with the command—"Thus far and no further!"

"Ha! I like not that." What irrepressible feeling, what honest indignation, what cunning insinuation, what indefinite equivoque, what simplicity, what skill, what hypocrisy, what hell, what mighty mischief was

comprised in those few words, that short aside exclamation which escaped from the lips of the good lieutenant! To all seeming, it was an involuntary utterance, not meant for others' ears, but it was overheard by Othello: hence, its value and power. What did the words refer to? What was it the honest man did not like? He evades explanation and simply says, "Nothing, my lord," in answer to Othello; but yet he cannot suppress the course of his thought and mutters to himself "Or if——,I know not what."† If it was not Cassio that had just gone out, Iago could not possibly guess who it was that so closely resembled him. Evidently, the exclamation had a sinister significance if the person *was* Cassio! "Was not that Cassio parted from my wife?" asks the general. "Cassio, my lord!" replies the honest friend, "No, sure, I cannot think it, that he would steal away so guilty-like seeing your coming." Othello has no doubt it was Cassio, but why does Iago try to make out it was not he? The good man who was unwilling to explain his exclamation is evidently unwilling to direct it against his friend, but he has ignorantly tripped in his effort to save him! *Steal away so guilty-like, seeing your coming*—ay, there's the point, and sure, there was something ugly which Iago did not like and which led to his exclamation. (Othello could not think this was false or feigned, for he had *overheard* it and Iago had blinked and eluded all explanation!) What was it? Did Iago dislike Cassio's solicitation of Desdemona to secure his reappointment? That could not be. ** *Steal away so guilty-like!* What was the guilt about? ** Oh, was it possible? Othello's soul was shaken with the most silly suspicions, and alas the day! the parting shaft of old Brabantio which had lain buried in the deepest depths of his heart now

† See note on III. iii. 36.

pierced up with its point and unsettled the calm and happy condition of his mind. And it seemed, too, somewhat strange and suspicious that Cassio should have stopped away from his mistress, from the day on which Othello joined the watch. Was Othello deceived in his wife? Was her "faith" a delusion—the faith on which he had staked his very life? Or, was he conjuring up a foolish fear, since Iago's exclamation might carry no evil import whatever?

Why did Othello permit any apprehension at all to cross his mind, any dark foreboding to overshadow the bright purity of his peace and happiness? Say not, dear reader, that suspicion lurked in the very nature of the Moor. Fear ever haunts the pedestal of earthly bliss: take man to the pinnacle and he will pray against a fall. The loveliest child sometimes strikes us as too lovely to live long. The presentiment of evil is indeed in the very web of human nature and sits at the threshold of all highest happiness. It comes of itself and needs neither seed nor stimulus from without. In Othello, both were present: the seed had been sown in his heart by Brabantio, and the stimulus was now given by the subtle suggestion of the devil. How could he prevent the shooting up of a prickly sprout, though it might lie in him to weed it out?

Neither was it true that Othello was lacking in that nobility which should have closed his mind to all innuendoes against the virtue of his wife. If Iago's hint had been plain and had been addressed to Othello, the latter would have been justified in answering the impertinence at the point of his sword: or, if he could have entertained the slightest suspicion about the honesty and sincerity of the man, he might indeed have interpreted it as a "trick" of hypocrisy and knavery, and proceeded forthwith to crush the villain. But the obser-

vation was neither plain nor addressed to him, and besides, it fell from the mouth of one, of whose honesty he had not the least doubt. Oh, the overhearing of a trusted friend's aside exclamation ! what mighty power it has even against the love which has become the very fountain of one's life-current ! And when the exclamation was vague and its evil significance was not clear and certain, Othello, of all men, was not the person to be enraged against the man who uttered it: he would proceed coolly and calmly to get at the explanation. He should talk to Iago directly and clear up the matter. But he has approached his bride and therefore advances to meet her, whom he had learnt to look upon as heaven's purest child, while Iago lags behind at a distance.

III

Othello and Desdemona were seated together on the couch. The very look of the wife's winning eyes, her mere touch of purity, expelled all suspicion from the husband's soul. Before ever he spoke a word to her, she told him of her conference with "a suitor" who was "languishing in his displeasure," and begged him to "take his present reconciliation." He had departed from the place just then, and indeed "so humbled" that he "left part of his grief with her to suffer with him." And fresh with her kind sympathy, she pleaded his cause and urged his speedy restoration, with a persistence which would have made one feel anxious about the impression it might produce on her lord's mind. But her innocence encouraged her zeal, and Othello gazed lovingly at her face and listened vacantly to her. His trust had been re-established automatically in her heavenly presence and could not be shaken now by her warm-hearted advocacy on behalf of Cassio. He was

trying to understand why it had been staggered at all a moment since, why any dark misgivings had entered his mind and made him feel uneasy. He analysed the curse of Brabantio and found it harmless and devoid of any evil import. He recollected the exclamation of Iago and the conversation which followed, and pondered one way and another. Perhaps the honest friend did not like the libertine's free interviews with Desdemona, for he was a lady's man, possessed of seducing gifts. That was a natural fear, though Othello would like him to know that she was indeed a divine creature whose honour was altogether unassailable. So ran the course of Othello's thoughts while he put off his wife's repeated request by short, evasive replies. He had made up his mind about reappointing Cassio to his post, but when, he could not decide at that moment :

"*Des.* Good love, call him back.
Oth. Not now, sweet Desdemon ; some other time.
Des. But shall't be shortly ?
Oth. The sooner, sweet, for you.
Des. Shall't be to-night at supper ?
Oth. No, not to-night.
Des. To-morrow dinner, then ?
Oth. I shall not dine at home ;
I meet the captains at the citadel.
Des. Why, then, to-morrow night, or Tuesday morn ;
On Tuesday noon, or night ; on Wednesday morn :
I prithee name the time, but let it not
Exceed three days. In faith, he's penitent ;
And yet his trespass, in our common reason—
Save that, they say, the wars must make examples
Out of her best—is not almost a fault
To incur a private check."

But Othello was absent-minded, and Desdemona, mistaking his silence for evasion, assumed a complaining tone and reminded her lord that Cassio had been his friend and mediator in the course of his wooing :

"When shall he come ?
Tell me, Othello ; I wonder in my soul,

What you would ask me that I should deny,
Or stand so mammering on. What! Michael Cassio,
That came a-wooing with you, and so many a time,
When I have spoke of you dispraisingly,
Hath ta'en your part,—to have so much to do
To bring him in! Trust me I could do much—"

Othello was touched by this allusion, and he at once granted the suit of his fair solicitor:

"Prithee, no more: let him come when he will;
I will deny thee nothing."

Indeed, how could he deny anything to such a pleader? Desdemona was glad at heart that her lord had at length allowed her prayer, but she could not accept his kindness without upbraiding him for the great hesitation with which he granted it.

"Why, this is not a boon;
'Tis as I should entreat you wear your gloves,
Or feed on nourishing dishes, or keep you warm,
Or sue to you to do a peculiar profit
To your own person: nay, when I have a suit
Wherein I mean to touch your love indeed,
It shall be full of poise and difficult weight,
And fearful to be granted."

The husband smiled at this playful pleasantry of his wife and answered it with a kiss, assuring her again that he would deny her nothing; and he besought her to leave him a little to himself. And Desdemona left the scene with a word of loving rebuke:

"Be as your fancies teach you;
Whate'er you be, I am obedient."

As she went out, Othello's soul disburdened itself in those memorable words, "so full of meaning, so full of mingled happiness and bitter foreboding:"

"Excellent wretch! Perdition catch my soul,
But I do love thee! and when I love thee not,
Chaos is come again."

Well might the happy husband exclaim in this strain, for he had just returned to the paradise he had all but quitted, and could not contemplate the misery of its loss, without terror and trepidation.

IV

No sooner had Desdemona departed than Iago drew near the general for the continuation of his diablerie. He had made a good beginning, and it was good, too, he thought, there was an interruption, for it gave time for the poison to work in Othello's mind. The result was, however, the other way, for though the honest friend's cunning exclamation and his apparently innocent reference to the stealthy manner of Cassio's exit had made the good husband uneasy and recalled to his mind the parting words of the old father, his faith and happiness had been restored by the divine presence of Desdemona, and he was going to catechise Iago on the subject of his interjection and dismiss it for ever from his mind, when the villain anticipated him and restarted the conversation, and with an artful 'Indeed!' threw him again into perplexity and confusion, worse than before.

It is a mistake to suppose that Iago had previously sketched in his mind the whole chain of events which actually took place in the course of that day. Indeed, the villain's greatest ability lay not so much in the exactness with which he could foresee consequences as in the extreme adroitness with which he could adjust his plan of action at every turn and safeguard himself at any sacrifice. In the end, as we shall see, Iago's schemes have scarcely succeeded though they have led to ruin and destruction, which he had little planned for or expected.

What was it Iago's evil soul thirsted to accomplish? He had succeeded in stepping into the lieutenancy but should see that he was not replaced by Cassio; and he wished to destroy the "well-tuned" happiness of Othello and Desdemona—to turn the lady's "virtue into pitch," to "practise upon the peace" of the loving husband and put him on the rack of jealousy, and eventually to end their happy union in a most unhappy and scandalous separation. He had not the remotest idea of bringing about the death of Othello or Desdemona (that would cut short the continuance of his malicious pleasure), neither did he bargain for the loss of his obedient and useful wife, much as he teased and abused her, or for any danger to himself, from which it should be next to impossible for him to escape. His plan was simple. It was no more than to create, in the mind of the Moor, a suspicion that Cassio was "too familiar with his wife" and to "pour the pestilence into his ear" that Desdemona pleaded the cause of the dismissed man and "repealed him for her body's lust"; and the circumstances were not unfavourable for the achievement of this deviltry. The evil suggestion had been made already by old Brabantio—"she has deceived her father and may thee"—and he had asserted, too, before the council, in Othello's very hearing, that nought but "practices of cunning hell" could have induced Desdemona, "in spite of nature, of years, of country, credit, everything, to fall in love with what she feared to look on." It was but natural to expect that the girl would soon open her eyes and repent of her choice, and fix her love on some one who combined "loveliness in favour" with "sympathy in years, manners and beauties," all which the Moor was defective in; and Cassio was just the man to attract her, possessed, as he was, of "a person and a smooth dispose to be suspected,

framed to make women false." To facilitate matters, the Moor was "of a free and open nature, that thinks men honest that but seem to be so," and could "as tenderly be led by the nose as asses!" The honest friend had only to exercise his skill and cunning and lead the trusting man from one circumstance to another, and he was bound to find himself in a hopeless maze and labyrinth! But easy as it was for Iago to start the mischief, it was not altogether in his power to determine its course or to control its compass; and it soon dragged everybody into its mighty vortex.

The short interval which occurred immediately after Iago's crafty exclamation however enabled him to mark the warmth and persistence with which Desdemona pleaded for the lieutenant's restoration; and it likewise pointed to him the direction in which he should resume his conversation, for he overheard the lady's words (and was reminded) that Cassio had been Othello's confidant and companion during the time of his courtship. This was indeed a good point from which to start, and with unique dexterity and dissimulation the master-villain renewed his attack and carried it on step by step until he made the Moor mad with doubt and perplexity.

It is almost impossible to analyse the art and indicate the gesture, tone, and manner, which the arch-dissembler employed in the accomplishment of his feat. The indirect hints, the guarded suggestions, the scattered words, the sly touches, the stops and breaks; the slow, measured emphasis with which he spoke, weighing his words before he gave them breath; the consummate skill with which he always laid bait for a question and gave information only in answer to it, without volunteering it himself; the extreme reluctance he disclosed to discover his thoughts; the great solicitude he showed for the

general's peace and happiness no less than for his good name and honour; the ingenious steps by which, commencing in a general way with insinuations against Cassio's honesty, he led up to suspicion against Desdemona and implanted it firmly in Othello's mind—all this can be fully perceived only upon a close and critical study and scrutiny of the dialogue which, alike for its unadorned simplicity and subtle power, stands unrivalled in the range of dramatic literature.

> "*Iago.* My noble lord,—
> *Oth.* What dost thou say, Iago?
> *Iago.* Did Michael Cassio, when you woo'd my lady,
> Know of your love?
> *Oth.* He did, from first to last; why dost thou ask?
> *Iago.* But for a satisfaction of my thought;
> No further harm."

Harm!—the word of evil import put in quite as slyly as 'steal' and 'guilty-like,' a little while ago! And the assurance that there is no further harm of course makes Othello think that there *is* something unpleasant which Iago is unwilling to reveal. But what was his thought and why did he need any satisfaction of it?

> "*Oth.* Why of thy thought, Iago?
> *Iago.* I did not think he had been acquainted with her."

The suggestion of evil is continued. But what harm could Iago infer from Cassio's acquaintance with Desdemona, for as a matter of fact, that acquaintance was of pretty long duration?

> "*Oth.* Oh, yes; and went between us very oft.
> *Iago.* Indeed!
> *Oth.* Indeed! ay, indeed; discern'st thou aught in that?
> Is he not honest?
> *Iago.* Honest, my lord!
> *Oth.* Honest! ay, honest.
> *Iago.* My lord, for aught I know.
> *Oth.* What dost thou think?
> *Iago.* Think, my lord!

Oth. Think, my lord! Alas, thou echo'st me,
As if there were some monster in thy thought
Too hideous to be shown. Thou dost mean something:
I heard thee say even now, thou lik'st not that,
When Cassio left my wife: what didst not like?
And when I told thee he was of my counsel
In my whole course of wooing, thou criedst 'Indeed!'
And didst contract and purse thy brow together,
As if thou then hadst shut up in thy brain
Some horrible conceit. If thou dost love me,
Show me thy thought."

By subtle suggestion and an 'Indeed!' artfully uttered, Iago has managed to drive Othello to make his own surmise about the matter which, he suspected, was concealed from him. Othello had learnt to look upon Cassio as a good and honourable friend, but perhaps he was mistaken; perhaps Cassio was not altogether honest in his present intentions, and Iago was evidently aware of them. Was he not really honest? What did Iago think of him?

Iago does not give any answer to Othello's uneasy queries, but only repeats them with a puzzled and bewildered air, obviously unwilling to speak out his mind. How can Othello help concluding that the honest man is hiding some thought "too hideous to be shown," that his involuntary exclamations were "close delations, working from the heart that passion cannot rule"—accusations kept close within the heart, oozing out by force of righteous indignation which it cannot altogether suppress? Othello is unable to bear the suspense; and demands Iago to speak out his thoughts *if he loved him*—to tell him if Cassio be not honest. The villain catches the hint and proceeds, before making any revelation, to strengthen the general's faith in his love and loyalty:

"My lord, you know I love you."

Othello not only admits Iago's love and honesty, but

tells him that his stops and measured utterances frighted him the more on that account:

> "For I know thou'rt full of love and honesty,
> And weigh'st thy words before thou giv'st them breath,
> Therefore these stops of thine fright me the more;
> For such things in a false disloyal knave
> Are tricks of custom, but in a man that's just
> They're close delations, working from the heart
> That passion cannot rule."

Why should Iago hesitate any longer to reveal his thoughts? And he attempts to speak out:

> "*Iago.* For Michael Cassio,—
> I dare be sworn,—I think that he is honest.
> *Oth.* I think so too.
> *Iago.* Men should be what they seem,
> Or those that be not, would they might seem none!
> *Oth.* Certain, men should be what they seem.
> *Iago.* Why, then, I think Cassio's an honest man."

It was clear that Iago wished to reveal the truth about Cassio's character, but hesitated and passed it over—probably because there was something very bad and damnatory in it—yet he could not cheat his general with an unqualified untruth. "*Why, then,* I think Cassio's an honest man"—oh, the venom in those two little words! Othello again entreats Iago to speak out the whole truth, without mincing it.

> "Nay, yet there's more in this.
> I prithee, speak to me as to thy thinkings,
> As thou dost ruminate, and give thy worst of thoughts
> The worst of words."

Iago's stops and breaks and evasions have thus created in Othello's mind, not only a suspicion about Cassio's honesty but also the impression that the information about him which was being withheld was of the worst kind. This impression the artful devil confirms by begging to be excused for his inability to give utterance to his worst thoughts, for they might be "vile and

false" and there could be no guarantee that the worst and foulest thoughts never enter into the purest breast:

> "Good my lord, pardon me;
> Though I am bound to every act of duty,
> I am not bound to that: all slaves are free.
> Utter my thoughts? Why, say they are vile and false,—
> As where's that palace whereinto foul things
> Sometimes intrude not? who has that breast so pure,
> Where no uncleanly apprehensions
> Keep leets and law-days, and in sessions sit
> With meditations lawful?"

A step higher in evil suggestion. At first, a doubt about Cassio's honesty, then the impression that the information withheld is something very bad about him, now the hint that it is something *vile*. "Say they are vile" (the supposition naturally sounds like an admission) "and false" (this qualification, uttered after a pause and with some hesitation, imports the contrary): but the great advance made by Iago is in the range and direction of his evil suggestion. The vague, high-sounding illustration of the intrusion of foul things into a palace, and uncleanly apprehensions keeping leets and law-days in the purest breasts, turns Othello's thoughts to Desdemona. A shadow seems to hover over the brightness of her purity! Is it possible? The curse of the old father comes up again and attempts to confound the faith of the good husband, but he had just scrutinised that malediction and found it entirely harmless. He is evidently creating a phantom before his mind if Iago'st rope referred to Cassio and no more. His silence is however quite unbearable, and Othello entreats him, in the name of friendship, to reveal his thoughts, whatever they might be:

> "Thou dost conspire against thy friend, Iago,
> If thou but think'st him wrong'd and mak'st his ear
> A stranger to thy thoughts."

How is it possible for Iago not to be affected by this appeal, yet how can he reveal his thoughts and ruin the peace and happiness of a friend? He must obey the general and speak out if he insists on it, yet he will beg him not to:

> "I do beseech you,
> Though I perchance am vicious in my guess,
> (As, I confess, it is my nature's plague
> To spy into abuses, and oft my jealousy
> Shapes faults that are not) that your wisdom,
> From one that so imperfectly conceits,
> Would take no notice, nor build yourself a trouble
> Out of his scattering and unsure observance.
> It were not for your quiet nor your good,
> Nor for my manhood, honesty, or wisdom,
> To let you know my thoughts."

What studious intervolvement to give the speech the air of a hesitating, unwilling utterance! What artful "whetting of the victim's anxiety to hear more by bidding him hear no more!" Othello has entreated Iago, in the name of friendship, not to keep from him even a mere thought or guess which regarded him as a wronged man, and the honest friend begs the general not to be so inquisitive. "Though perchance I have made a vicious guess,*" says he, "and do entertain a suspicion that you have been wronged, (and, I own, it is my nature's curse to pry into abuses and form suspicions, and oftentimes they prove wrong), I beseech you that you will not (by appealing to me as you have done) insist on knowing my thoughts, for it were not wise that you should take notice of such imperfect, scattering and uncertain observations as mine and build yourself a trouble thereon." Oh, what subtle, suppressed suggestion, what friendly knavery, what deceptive disparagement of self! What sly affirmation

* See note on III. iii. 145.

that Othello *has been* wronged! How the 'perchance' and 'oftentimes' sound in Othello's ears like 'certainly' and 'sometimes!' How Iago's depreciation of himself and his observation appears to the poor victim like the unwillingness of a loving friend to make a painful and disquieting revelation! How the villain's confession of his "nature's plague"—a suspicious, spying-into-abuses character—indirectly certifies his knowledge of "all qualities of human dealings" and his capacity to detect evil and wrong, while it enhances the importance of the revelation he is withholding! What false friendship, what vague forecast of trouble and misery, what fresh insinuation, oh, what poison in those concluding words!—

> "It were not for your quiet, nor your good,
> Nor for my manhood, honesty, or wisdom,
> To let you know my thoughts."

Othello is launched into perplexity. The shadow of his dark thoughts does not confine itself to Cassio. Again it hovers over Desdemona, again the old man's parting words trouble the mind, again the analysis and argumentation. * * Not for Othello's quiet or good—what did Iago mean? * "Not for my manhood"—Desdemona * * Cassio * * oh, was it possible? What a vile thought and what hellish suggestion! But how can he fall foul of Iago, the honest friend, who, out of sincere solicitude for his peace, was excusing himself from making any revelation? yet how can he ignore it or refrain from knowing it? Lost in a confusion of feelings, the poor man stares a wild look and can only utter a bare question—"What dost thou mean?"

Othello's thoughts have evidently turned to Desdemona, and Iago must give a timely hit in that direction. Accordingly, he spouts on the value of good name in man and—*woman*:

"Good name in man and woman, dear my lord,
Is the immediate jewel of their souls.
Who steals my purse steals trash ; 'tis something, nothing ;
'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands ;
But he that filches from me my good name
Robs me of that which not enriches him
And makes me poor indeed."

Othello's confusion becomes worse at the pause before and after 'woman' and the low, clear, emphatic tone in which the word is uttered. The present bearing of the speech is of course left to imagination. Does Iago hesitate to speak out his suspicions, so to save his friend Cassio's good name, or does he refer to Desdemona? Or does he suggest that Othello has been robbed of his good name and honour? The poor man becomes impatient, and he says in a tone of resentment—

"By heaven, I'll know thy thoughts."

Iago has however too much solicitude for the peace of his friend to be cowed down by his indignation into a revelation of what must necessarily make him quite miserable. And he respectfully refuses to permit the general to know his thoughts :

"You cannot, if my heart were in your hand ;
Nor shall not, whilst 'tis in my custody."

What can poor Othello do but stare at his friend and burst out into an exclamation of anxious helplessness? "Ha!"—What abomination is he going to hear, for he will presently insist on Iago's revelation of his thoughts? What thunderbolt is going to fall on his head? Othello's mind is deadened with doubt and anxiety and confusion. He cannot think, he cannot speak. Iago catches the situation and boldly deals his master-stroke. He cautions the general against jealousy in which it is his aim to plunge him :

"Oh, beware, my lord, of jealousy;
It is the green-ey'd monster which doth mock
The meat it feeds on. That cuckold lives in bliss
Who, certain of his fate, loves not his wronger;
But, oh, what damnèd minutes tells he o'er
Who dotes, yet doubts, suspects, yet fondly loves!"

How can Othello resent the liberty of a well-meaning friend who speaks from the most earnest care for his peace and happiness? As yet, he has said nothing directly against Desdemona, and his warning was not incompatible with her innocence and purity. "Oh, misery!" adds Othello at the conclusion of Iago's speech: the life of a doubting cuckold is indeed most miserable. Othello stares at his friend, expecting to hear more from him, but Iago is not a fool to relieve him of his perplexity. He will only utter a general truth which stings the puzzled mind with suggestion and suspicion:

"Poor and content is rich, and rich enough;
But riches fineless is as poor as winter
To him that ever fears he shall be poor.
Good heaven, the souls of all my tribe defend
From jealousy!"

Othello wakes up as if from a trance, and shakes off his confusion. Is Iago withholding any ugly revelation from him lest he should thereby become jealous and miserable? The good friend had better be assured that Othello's was not a jealous nature. He had the most implicit faith in Desdemona's integrity, and was not the man to torment himself with silly doubts, because she was fair and beautiful, free of speech, and fond of society, nor because he was not blessed with the charming graces of Venetian youths. Doubt and suspicion would be unbearable to him—he must at once proceed to proof and arrive at a decision one way or the other. Othello's words indeed give Iago no weak assurance of his readiness to hear, and encourage him to speak:

"Why, why is this?
Think'st thou I'd make a life of jealousy,
To follow still the changes of the moon
With fresh suspicions? No; to be once in doubt
Is once to be resolv'd: exchange me for a goat,
When I shall turn the business of my soul
To such exsufflicate and blow'd surmises,
Matching thy inference. 'Tis not to make me jealous
To say my wife is fair, feeds well, loves company,
Is free of speech, sings, plays, and dances well;
Where virtue is, these are more virtuous:
Nor from mine own weak merits will I draw
The smallest fear or doubt of her revolt;
For she had eyes, and chose me. No, Iago!
I'll see before I doubt; when I doubt, prove:
And on the proof there is no more but this,
Away at once with love or jealousy!"

Iago is at perfect liberty to make his worst revelation about Desdemona, and Othello promises not to be jealous! He is prepared to hear any evil report against her to put an end to his present unendurable suspense! Alas the fall! and the sly, subtle steps by which the vile villain has wrought it! Without any express accusation against any one, by mere oblique hints and indirect innuendoes, how he made the simple, good man draw the conclusions himself, how at first he made him suspect the honesty of Cassio, next induced him to imagine there was something vile and vicious about the trusted favourite, then cunningly cast a distant cloud over Desdemona, made it darker and more direct, and by a strong warning against jealousy at length hurled the poor man into the pit from which there was no rising! Iago has not yet uttered the name of Desdemona nor made any reference to her in his conversation or any suggestion which he could not disown, should it turn against him. Yet, in less than a quarter of an hour, he has induced giddiness in Othello and made him slide down the tower of faith and happiness into the abyss of doubt and misery! By sheer hellish hypnotism, he has

wiped out from the memory of the loving husband all that divinity of Desdemona, which had resuscitated his staggering faith just a little while since and made him feel his absolute dependence on the "excellent wretch!" He has got him, alas, to turn the conversation to his angelic wife, degrade her and himself by discussing her virtue, and to declare his stern preparedness to listen to any evil account about her! Othello has talked of his wife's fidelity, why should Iago hesitate any longer to speak with express reference to her? He should however do it slowly and warily, watching the effect of his words on Othello. He should begin with a general attack on the duplicity of Venetian women, and, if that was well received, it would be easy game for him to demolish the virtue of Desdemona. The powder and shot were ready in his hands, and he was only waiting for the moment when he should allow the spark to touch them. The parting words of old Brabantio—"she has deceived her father, and may thee"—and his plaint before the Senate, that nought but witchcraft could have induced his daughter "to fall in love with what she feared to look on"—these must eventually win him victory.

Immediately Othello has avowed the strength of mind with which he could hear any evil report against his wife, Iago begins his revelation, which of course he is now very glad to make, out of love and as in duty bound, besides that it pained him to find the noble, unsuspecting general hoodwinked and cheated on account of his own good and generous nature. The villain ventures to speak of Othello's *wife*—the word has just been uttered by the husband—but as yet he says nothing directly against her, though with devilish ingenuity he proposes to reserve the proof—of what, he has not yet revealed! Says the loving friend:

"I am glad of this; for now I shall have reason
To show the love and duty that I bear you
With franker spirit; therefore, as I am bound,
Receive it from me. I speak not yet of proof.
Look to your wife; observe her well with Cassio;
Wear your eyes thus, not jealous nor secure:
I would not have your free and noble nature
Out of self-bounty be abus'd; look to't.
I know our country disposition well:
In Venice they do let heaven see the pranks
They dare not show their husbands; their best conscience
Is not to leave't undone, but keep't unknown."

The honest friend has said it! He has the proof! And of course he could speak quite confidently of Venetian pranks, knowing well his "country disposition" and "all qualities of human dealings." Othello is struck mute with doubt and distress and perplexity, and can fill Iago's pause but with a piteous utterance, the painful effort of reconcilement to a terrible truth suddenly revealed,—"Dost thou say so?"

The merciless villain promptly fires the guns which he reserved to the last, and lo! he waves the flag of victory!

"*Iago.* She did deceive her father, marrying you;
And when she seem'd to shake and fear your looks,
She lov'd them most.
Oth. And so she did.
Iago. Why, go to, then;
She that, so young, could give out such a seeming
To seel her father's eyes up close as oak—
He thought 'twas witchcraft!—but I am much to blame;
I humbly do beseech you of your pardon
For too much loving you.
Oth. I am bound to thee for ever."

The parting words of the old father, and the impression of an honest friend, to boot! The sweet secrecy of Othello's love-suit proves poison to his soul and discolours his faith in the fidelity of his wife! She had deceived her father, why might she not deceive her husband? This was the warning of Brabantio, and it

is now the argument of Iago, which strikes the husband like a thunderbolt. "And so she did," says he, in a despairing tone, confirming the open insinuation of deception in Desdemona. How can his faith in her honour remain unshaken? One more blow from the candid friend, in a more frank and familiar style, and Othello can scarcely control his agitation or conceal it:

> "Why, go to, then;
> She that, so young, could give out such a seeming
> To seel her father's eyes up close as oak—
> He thought 'twas witchcraft!—"

Othello is visibly affected, and Iago suddenly breaks off in his revelation and expresses his regret for the frankness with which he has spoken:

> "But I am much to blame;
> I humbly do beseech you of your pardon
> For too much loving you."

Othello has heard quite enough and would like to be left to himself, calmly to scrutinize and understand why his faith was again shaken so quickly and rudely and suddenly. Pressing his left hand against his forehead, he extends the other to his friend and acknowledges his indebtedness to him: "I am bound to thee for ever." The love and faith of a wife who had forsaken "country, credit, every thing," for his sake, has been tested by the honesty of a villain and found wanting!

A pause. Othello tries to recover himself and to collect and balance his thoughts, but he is disturbed by the good friend who cannot withhold his words of commiseration. The perplexed husband neverthless proceeds with his mental discussion, throwing out short answers in reply to Iago's observations of sympathy, which intrude into his inattentive ears:

> "*Iago.* I see this hath a little dash'd your spirits.
> *Oth.* Not a jot, not a jot.

> *Iago.* I' faith, I fear it has.
> I hope you will consider what is spoke
> Comes from my love. But I do see y'are mov'd:
> I am to pray you not to strain my speech
> To grosser issues nor to larger reach
> Than to suspicion.
> *Oth.* I will not.
> *Iago.* Should you do so, my lord,
> My speech should fall into such vile success
> As my thoughts aim not at. Cassio's my worthy friend—
> My lord, I see y'are mov'd.
> *Oth.* No, not much mov'd;
> I do not think but Desdemona's honest."

All Iago's work has come to nought! Othello has returned to his faith in Desdemona. His soul has dispelled the cloud of suspicion which threatened to envelop it, and once more the fair virtue of his good wife stands before it in all its purity. Iago was indeed professing to soothe the wound he had inflicted by his revelation (he was of course really deepening it) and what could he do now but express his joy at the happy conclusion of Othello—"I do not think but Desdemona's honest"? He readily exclaims:

> "Long live she so! and long live you to think so!"

The villain knows of course when to strike and when to kiss, and his kisses are more dangerous than his blows! If Othello had heard the words of his honest friend and marked their tone, he would have been thrown again into maddening doubt, but he was lost in reflection and rumination and scarcely noticed the utterance. His own vascillation, however, supplies the weapon with which he can readily be prostrated. "I do not think but Desdemona's honest"—this is the conclusion at which he arrives after the balancing of his thoughts; but the very next second, he begins to think aloud!—

> "And yet, how nature erring from itself,—"

The devil at once seizes the suggestion and deals a most dangerous blow:

> "Ay, there's the point; as—to be bold with you—
> Not to affect many proposèd matches
> Of her own clime, complexion, and degree,
> Whereto we see in all things nature tends—
> Foh! one may smell in such, a will most rank,
> Foul disproportion, thoughts unnatural.
> But—pardon me—I do not in position
> Distinctly speak of her, though I may fear
> Her will, recoiling to her better judgment,
> May fall to match you with her country forms
> And happily repent."

Oh, the subtle steps by which the villain throws dirt on Desdemona! Othello cannot think but that his wife is honest, yet he is puzzled why, wandering from the natural course and disliking her own countrymen, she had chosen him for her husband. Iago notes the point and elaborates it by slow degrees. To begin with, such conduct, he says, suggests the most wild and perverse wilfulness. Othello receives the suggestion with indifference and Iago advances a step further and adds—foul disproportion, an ugly want of symmetry between the tender maiden and her most obstinate, extravagant self-will. Then he goes a step further and ventures the vile suggestion—thoughts unnatural. Othello repels this with an indignant look, and the villain turns round to save himself. His assertion was a general one, not directed specially against Desdemona, who might be quite pure in her thoughts, though (and Iago is always careful to qualify and re-qualify his statements and suggestions) he might justly suspect that her self-will, which had made her choose the Moor for her husband, obeying her better judgment, had begun to compare him with her own countrymen and perhaps to repent of her choice. One step more and he would have suggested that Cassio

was the most likely person to attract Desdemona and that there was deep significance in his familiarity with her and in her persistent pleading of his cause. Othello was however unable to stand the presence and obtrusion of Iago any longer. He had been told enough and wished to be left alone to weigh the circumstances calmly, that he might arrive at a dispassionate judgment: and he bade a polite farewell to his candid friend:

> "Farewell, farewell:
> If more thou dost perceive, let me know more;
> Set on thy wife to observe: leave me, Iago."

The noble Moor who dislikes to hear any further discussion of Desdemona's fidelity from "the gross lips of Iago" descends from his dignity and desires the friend to watch and to set on his wife to observe! The dart of suspicion has penetrated deep into his soul and the cry he utters is indeed most mournful:

> "Why did I marry? This honest creature doubtless
> Sees and knows more, much more, than he unfolds."

Iago is obliged to leave the place in obedience to Othello's request, but after going a few paces, he returns to give the general a bit of parting advice—"to scan this thing no further" but "to leave it to time," to hold off the reappointment of Cassio, for a while, though indeed his ability is unquestionable (the praise is of course meant to damn him at the present juncture), and to note if Desdemona "strain his entertainment with any strong or vehement importunity," for "much will be seen in that." Meanwhile, he requests—

> "Let me be thought too busy in my fears—
> As worthy cause I have to fear I am—
> And hold her free, I do beseech your honour."

Iago has thus sown all the seeds of poison in Othello's mind. By a single stroke he has both ensured the

prevention of Cassio's reappointment and pointed him out as the person on whose relations with Desdemona the general should keep a watchful eye. And the palliation of Desdemona's guilt and the recommendation to hold her innocent, in the mean time, is of course calculated to suggest the contrary! The devil has indeed done everything in his power to place the good husband on the rack of jealousy! Othello does not wish to prolong the conversation and dismisses his friend with a short assurance of his conduct in the matter—" Fear not my government;" and Iago finally departs. The general is however too far gone in his fall to be able to recover himself, and he bursts out into a soliloquy which discloses the terrible effect already produced in him by the devil's insinuations:

" This fellow's of exceeding honesty,
And knows all qualities, with a learned spirit
Of human dealings. If I do prove her haggard,
Though that her jesses were my dear heart-strings,
I'd whistle her off and let her down the wind,
To prey at fortune. Haply, for I am black,
And have not those soft parts of conversation
That chamberers have, or for I am declin'd
Into the vale of years,—yet that's not much—
She's gone. I am abus'd; and my relief
Must be to loathe her. Oh, curse of marriage,
That we can call these delicate creatures ours,
And not their appetites! I had rather be a toad,
And live upon the vapour of a dungeon,
Than keep a corner in the thing I love
For others' uses. Yet 'tis the plague of great ones;
Prerogativ'd are they less than the base;
'Tis destiny unshunnable, like death:
Even then this forkèd plague is fated to us
When we do quicken.—Look where she comes."

The candid friend has just spoken of the unnaturalness of Desdemona's preference of Othello, and suggested that, "her will recoiling to her better judgment," she might begin to compare him with her countrymen and

to repent of her choice. This suggestion rankles in the mind of Othello, and it seems to him not unlikely that his inferiority in respect of youth and beauty and engaging manners and conversation might have induced his wife to fall away from her love. The idea torments him that he is "abused," and his only relief is "to loathe her" and "whistle her off;" for it is not in his nature to plague himself with doubt and suspicion. "He will not doubtingly love, and loving he will not doubt; if he *must* doubt, he will see and prove, and according to the result he will make an end of love or jealousy."

V

It was near dinner-time. The leading gentry of the place, whom Othello had invited to the banquet, were already come, one after another, and were duly received by the gracious hostess. They were awaiting the arrival of the general who, they were told, was busily engaged in a conference with his lieutenant. He had told Desdemona that he would go to her "straight," and the message, too, was brought by Emilia that Iago was gone; still Othello was delaying to come. It was best to remind him of the guests that were waiting. So the punctual wife took the maid with her and hastened to him—a gay, sprightly angel in her loveliest costume—expecting to be thanked and rewarded for the loving rebuke she would let him hear:

"How now, my dear Othello!
Your dinner, and the generous islanders
By you invited, do attend your presence.
Oth. I am to blame."

The mere appearance of the divine Desdemona dispelled all doubt from Othello's mind, and he had exclaimed even while she was approaching him:

"If she be false, heaven mock'd itself!—
I'll not believe it."

The terrible agitation and emotion from which he was just recovered however made the brave soldier feel quite weak and feeble, and the faint voice in which he spoke startled the loving wife who marked the change.

"*Des.* Why do you speak so faintly?
Are you not well?
Oth. I have a pain upon my forehead, here."

As he spoke of his pain, Othello held his forehead with his right hand and closed his eyes. His temples were indeed throbbing, and he was unable, too, to face his wife whom he had been grossly misjudging a minute before. The anxiety of the affectionate wife increased, but she quickly discovered the explanation of her lord's ailment: Othello had been with his lieutenant on the watch during the last seven nights, and the continuous vigil had produced the headache.

"*Des.* Faith, that's with watching; 'twill away again:
Let me but bind it hard, within this hour
It will be well.
Oth. Your napkin is too little;
Let it alone. Come, I'll go in with you.
Des. I am very sorry that you are not well."

Othello was unwilling to stay there longer or to get into a conversation, lest Desdemona might perceive his perturbation and suspect that there was something, besides his headache, which was troubling him. He felt that he returned in that instant to the paradise he had all but quitted for the second time, and he realised again his narrow escape from chaos and perdition. His faith was revived as if by a spell and he felt certain there was nothing wrong about his beloved angel, but something rotten somewhere which had led Iago to take him to the very brink of hell. He should pitch into him about

it after dinner, but just now he must recover his spirits and regain his equanimity and get through the banquet as if nothing had ever disturbed him. So he gently held off Desdemona's hands that were binding the kerchief against his forehead and prayed her to let it alone; and for an excuse, he said the napkin was too little, though really it was not. It was quite large enough to go round his head and was indeed the same he had given her as a talisman, but he did not see it. While Desdemona was returning it to her pocket, he got up and looked lovingly into her sweet, celestial eyes and folded her to his heart—the last embrace, alas, of the ill-starred lovers—and both proceeded in immediately. But oh! the hand of fate, which was all along working against them, dropped the precious handkerchief on the ground, for, in the hurry and excitement, Desdemona thrust it into a fold of her gown!

Othello got ready for the banquet in a few minutes. The guests were extremely glad to meet him and to note his cheerful countenance, for Desdemona had just told them that he was somewhat indisposed, suffering from a slight headache, but would be with them presently. Othello had indeed shaken off all doubt and suspicion from his mind and strengthened himself to be quite at ease with the noblemen whom he had invited, and, be it said to his credit, they were impressed and delighted no less with the kind regards and attentions of the host than with the gracious offices of the hostess. Toasts were drunk to the health and happiness of the Duke and the Duches, the Senators, the late governor of the island (Signior Montano), and the present governor and his benign lady, the hostess. The toast in honour of Montano congratulated him on his recent recovery, and Montano, in replying to it, wished to remove a misapprehension that seemed to

prevail in regard to his attitude towards Cassio. He entertained the highest appreciation of the late lieutenant's great abilities, to which the host himself could bear testimony, and sincerely hoped he would soon be reinstated in his place. He was not so mean-minded as to bear a lasting grudge on account of a slight accident, and nothing would have given him greater pleasure than to have seen good Cassio and shaken hands with him at that dinner. Desdemona's countenance brightened up with sweetest smiles in the course of this speech, and the poor husband, who noted it, fell as by a spiral into doubt and suspicion, whirled round and round, and struggled in vain to get out of it. The high encomiums then bestowed on the hostess, and the loud acclamations with which the hall resounded whenever her name was mentioned or coupled with that of her noble lord, soon fanned the fire of jealousy and he felt as if he was going mad or his head was about to break to pieces. The dinner was over, but he found it would be impossible for him to stay at the merriments. He looked at Desdemona. Her appearance was heavenly: her eyes spoke love and innocence. Every one paid homage to her and she was free and courteous to all. What infinite wealth was his if that sweet angel was indeed pure—if he stood alone in her affections! But oh, the doubt that tortured him! He glanced at his wife, he remembered the parting words of her father, he recollected Iago's hints. He felt alternately happy and miserable. He could not remain there any longer in his perplexed and painful condition. He excused himself from the remaining programme—the guests had already heard of his indisposition—and, leaving Desdemona to attend to them, retired into his room to recover himself. And a few minutes after, he sent word to Iago to go to him directly.

VI

How unfortunate it was for the noble Moor and the gentle damsel, who had linked her fate with his, that the banquet should have followed so closely at the heels of the villany which had been set in motion by the devil's own agent! Who can deny that if Othello had been permitted a couple of hours' rest and thought he might have regained the equilibrium of his mind, and in the divine presence of his wife firmly and unshakably reestablished the love he had staked on her faith? But fate was working hard against the wedded pair. It prevented the poison which Iago had put into Othello's soul from dying out completely under the influence of Desdemona, and revived it at the dinner. And it placed within the villain's reach the handkerchief he had long been bothering his wife to steal from her mistress, for, soon after it was dropped on the floor and Othello and Desdemona were gone, Emilia picked it up and was glad she at last found a way of pleasing her petulant man:

> "I am glad I have found this napkin.
> This was her first remembrance from the Moor:
> My wayward husband hath a hundred times
> Woo'd me to steal it; but she so loves the token,
> For he conjur'd her she should ever keep it,
> That she reserves it evermore about her
> To kiss and talk to. I'll have the work ta'en out,
> And give't Iago: what he will do with it
> Heaven knows, not I;
> I nothing, but to please his fantasy."

Emilia loved her mistress too well to do her any injury. She loved her more than she did her own husband and was indeed so devoted to her that, if necessary, she would sacrifice her own and her husband's life to save her. She could never persuade herself to steal the handkerchief, for which her husband

continually pestered her at home; and even now that she happened to pick it up, she would not give it to him, for she knew how very much her mistress prized the token—her first from the Moor which he had given her on the wedding night, conjuring her ever to keep it carefully—and knew, too, that the good lady "reserved it evermore about her to kiss and talk to" (in her lord's absence) and would run mad if it should be missing. She did not know why Iago wanted the "trifle": it was a whim of his, and she was glad she could now satisfy it without doing any wrong to her beloved lady. She would have the work copied accurately, give back the original to her mistress, and palm off the duplicate on her troublesome husband! A minute afterwards, however, she thought she had better at once copy it herself as well as she could, that she might return the original to her mistress immediately she returned from the banquet, and there was ample time, for it was just past eleven o'clock and the feasting would not be over before one. So thinking, the good maid ran in and got a plain handkerchief, and seating herself behind a screen in a corner of the verandah, she was copying the work on it as best she could; and she thought she was quite secure from all intrusion, as the dinner had already commenced and Iago had gone away to his lodging. But she had scarcely finished half-a-dozen "strawberries" when the sound of distant steps caught her ears, and, no mistake, it was Iago's gait! She was frightened out of her wits. Both the original and the duplicate she was forging, she quickly hid in her pocket, and the next minute she stood before her husband with empty hands, puzzled and perplexed like a criminal caught in the act! Iago's evil soul was stung with doubt when he found her alone in the place at that hour, and her looks, he thought, betrayed crime,

He addressed her forthwith in a sharp and surly tone:

"How now! what do you here alone?
Emil. Do not you chide; I have a thing for you.
Iago. You have a thing for me!
It is a common thing—
Emil. Ha!
Iago. To have a foolish wife.
Emil. Oh, is that all? What will you give me now
For that same handkerchief?
Iago. What handkerchief?
Emil. What handkerchief!
Why, that the Moor first gave to Desdemona;
That which so often you did bid me steal.
Iago. Hast stol'n it from her?
Emil. No; but she let it drop by negligence,
And, to the advantage, I being here, took 't up.
Look, here it is.
Iago. A good wench; give it me.
Emil. What will you do with 't, that you have been so earnest
To have me filch it?
Iago. [*Snatching it*] Why, what's that to you?
Emil. If it be not for some purpose of import,
Give 't me again; poor lady, she 'll run mad
When she shall lack it.
Iago. Be not acknown on 't; I have use for it.
Go, leave me."

Fate brought its agent suddenly on the scene before the work of the handkerchief was fully copied and the duplicate was ready; and Emilia, conscious of her compromising situation and fearing that the rude husband might search her pocket and charge her with fraud, offered the original to him and was glad to escape his abuse and to be sent away with a kind word. Did she intend to finish the "strawberries" on the duplicate before the evening and somehow substitute it for the original in her husband's hands, or, if that was not practicable, to give the duplicate to Desdemona? Anyway, the good maid sacrificed her beloved mistress to save herself at the moment, and she was destined to pay for the fault with nothing less than her life!

Iago put the handkerchief into his pocket and felt thankful for the good luck which placed it in his hands at a most opportune moment. He knew, of course, what to do with it, and would at once have gone away to Cassio's lodging to drop it there, but the general had sent for him and he must wait there to see him. Why was he sent for at that hour (it was just past twelve) while the banquet was still continuing? Had the poison begun its work in Othello's mind and made it impossible for him to stay through the dinner and the entertainments? Was he going to demand proofs of Desdemona's guilt, or would he indeed fall foul of Iago for the hints he had thrown out? The honest man was prepared for all contingencies, and, if ever he entertained the least doubt of success, he felt it was now guaranteed to him by the handkerchief. He could soliloquise in no uncertain vein:

> "I will in Cassio's lodging lose this napkin,
> And let him find it. Trifles light as air
> Are to the jealous confirmations strong
> As proofs of holy writ; this may do something.
> The Moor already changes with my poison;
> Dangerous conceits are in their natures poisons,
> Which at the first are scarce found to distaste,
> But with a little act upon the blood
> Burn like the mines of sulphur."

Iago had scarcely uttered the last words when he observed Othello going to him in a most furious manner. The Moor was evidently changing with the poison poured into his ears, barely an hour since. Jealousy was already ablaze in his soul! The devil might well exclaim with malignant glee—

> "Not poppy, nor mandragora,
> Nor all the drowsy syrups of the world,
> Shall ever medicine thee to that sweet sleep
> Which thou ow'dst yesterday."

VII

Othello's was by no means a jealous character. By nature, he was noble, unsuspicious, and confiding; not prone to imagine doubts and make himself miserable by a constant fishing for proofs and a suspicious scrutiny of every trifling circumstance. It never made him in the least uneasy that his wife's beauty was peerless, that her accomplishments were rare, that she was fond of society and moved freely with all, that she was extolled by every one: neither would he, from his own "weak merits," draw "the smallest fear or doubt of her revolt, for she had eyes and chose" him. All this was indeed true of him so long as things went in their natural course, so long as no seeds of suspicion were sown in his soul. But how if an honest friend should insinuate vice in the paragon of virtue the good man loved and worshipped so much? How if he proposed to spare his feelings by not speaking "yet of proof" but broadly hinted that he was "abus'd" by his supposed angel and warned him to have his eye on her? How if her preference of the Moor to the Venetian suitors who possessed distinct advantages in respect of "years, manners, and beauties,"—how if this very circumstance which inspired the husband with pride—was turned against the damsel, and from the mouth of her father who thought her unnatural choice had been effected by "practices of cunning hell"? How if the privilege of private love granted by her to the Moor was likewise turned against her and he was cruelly reminded of the father's malison which had branded her as a deceitful daughter, bound to prove a deceitful wife? Could the Moor nevertheless stand firm in his love and trust? Could he remain proof against jealousy, against

the very inception of it? It is true he could not, like Leontes, " make a life of jealousy, to follow still the changes of the moon with fresh suspicions;" he could not remain in a state of doubt, turning " the business of his soul " to "exsufflicate and blow'd surmises:"

> " No; to be once in doubt
> Is once to be resolv'd. * *
> * * * * *
> * * * * *
> I'll see before I doubt; when I doubt, prove:
> And on the proof there is no more but this,
> Away at once with love or jealousy!"

But *did* he see before he doubted—indeed, *could* he, simple credulous man that he was who " thought men honest that but seemed to be so?" And if suspense proved utterly unendurable to him and drove him to prove—to settle—his doubt one way or the other, could he cast off his love if the doubt was proved, or remain unshaken in it if the doubt was *not* proved (for in the nature of things it could not be *dis*proved)? Was it really in his power, as he supposed it was, to "loathe" his wife and to " whistle her off " if he proved her " haggard," and, if he did not prove her so, to dispel all doubt from his mind, to do " away with jealousy," to love her as before? Poor Othello, who miscalculated his capacity to judge and to act! He could not see well before he doubted, for he was no intellectual giant and no shrewd man of the world to scan the subtle knavery of a master-villain, to suspect the honesty of a hypocritical friend: neither could he, if he proved his doubt, cast " his excellent wretch " away, yet continue to live, escaping "perdition" and "chaos." There was but one alternative left him, one contingency under which alone the continuance of his happy life was possible: he should *fail* to prove his doubt—he should conclude

that his honest friend was hasty and unjust in his aspersions and suspicions,—*and* (more essential still) he must possess the strength to drive away all jealousy from his soul, to continue his love pure, perfect, and impenetrable to all suspicion. Let us follow the destiny of the luckless man.

Othello *did* indeed try to see before he doubted, before he allowed the evil suggestion of his friend to penetrate into his mind. His spirits were dashed by the suggestion, but he controlled himself, collected and balanced his thoughts, and returning to his faith said, "I do not think but Desdemona's honest." It was however of little avail, for the devil was ready at hand to renew his envenomed shafts, and the victim fell a prey to them. Doubt entered deep into his soul, and noble Othello desired his friend to watch and let him know more, and to set on his wife to observe, assuring him of his "government" and self-control in the mean time! Indeed, jealousy commenced its growth in his soul, for suspicion is the seed thereof, which no sooner it touches the ground than it sprouts, and grows luxuriantly on the poorest soil.

Othello had thought he could easily cast away all jealousy, should his doubt prove unreal; but the result disappointed him, for, despite his restoration to love and faith by the divine charms of Desdemona, and the peaceful condition of mind which followed, he lapsed into suspicion and jealousy towards the close of the dinner and was obliged to withdraw from it in a state of pain and perplexity. Oh, the misery which Iago had predicted! Was he destined to suffer it? He shuddered at the bare idea. He should at once put an end to his doubt and the jealousy which was taking hold of him. But how? Did Iago know more than he unfolded, and could he furnish conclusive proof of Desdemona's

guilt? And alas, if he could, what would be left for the poor husband dethroned from love but "perdition" and "chaos?" He should bid goodbye to peace and happiness, to his very life. But say the suspicions of the honest friend (Othello could never doubt his honesty, though he questioned the correctness and fairness of his surmises and observations) proved false and unjust, could the Moor stand unshaken in his love, undisturbed in his trust, proof against all jealousy? Present experience showed he could not, for his jealousy, kindled but now, tormented him as if it had been of months' and years' duration. * * In the solitude of his chamber, after calm thought and scrutiny, Othello returned once again, and for the third time, to the paradise he had quitted. With the sweet image of Desdemona before his mind, he could not disbelieve her faith and purity. Her mere look charmed him into love and trust. * * But alas, the suspicion renewed in his soul! The father's curse, the daughter's deportment, the honest friend's hints and warning—oh, the agony of the doubt! the torture of the uncertainty! It was too much for the noble Moor to endure. He felt as if he were stretched on the rack. Was his wife really "honest?" Was the good friend unjust in his suspicions? or, was he "just" and correct? Had he more to tell? Oh, the fatal chaos which must follow a full and convincing revelation! * * The divine Desdemona again before his mind! The return of faith and love! Certain, Iago's calumny was unjust. *She* false! Impossible, impossible! The foolish friend had ruined the Moor's happiness with his hasty observations, for the doubt which entered into his soul could not be rooted out. It sprouted up again and again, and made him quite miserable. Desdemona was true as truth, but Othello was undone all the same. No more could he command

"the tranquil mind," no more "content" to him in life. Farewell to ambition, farewell to war, farewell to everything he loved! "Othello's occupation was gone!" Desdemona was pure as heaven, yet the husband was doomed to perdition! It was the mischief of that infernal fool, Iago. Othello's grief would have flowed in tears, but his rage overpowered him, and he ran into the verandah to meet the officious friend who had poisoned his mind with suspicion. * * False to him! False with Cassio! When, where, what proof? Yes, Iago had talked of proof. Let him now furnish it, or woe upon his life! He had set Othello on the rack by obscure hints and suggestions, against one who was heavenly pure, and put an end to his peaceful and happy life. Grant she had erred with Cassio, yet he had been happy, so he had heard nothing of it. But now, alas, with nothing definitely known, he swung from heaven to hell and hell to heaven! Oh, the pity of it! the pity of it! Was she false to him? Impossible! Yet, oh, the doubt which killed him!

"Ha! ha! false to me?
Iago. Why, how now, general! no more of that.
Oth. Avaunt! be gone! thou hast set me on the rack.
I swear 'tis better to be much abus'd
Than but to know 't a little.

* *

What sense had I in her stol'n hours of lust?
I saw 't not, thought it not: it harm'd not me:
I slept the next night well, fed well, was free and merry.
I found not Cassio's kisses on her lips:
He that's robb'd, not wanting what is stol'n,
Let him not know 't, and he 's not robb'd at all.

* * * * *

I had been happy, if the general camp,
Pioners and all, had tasted her sweet body,
So I had nothing known. Oh, now, for ever
Farewell the tranquil mind! farewell content!
Farewell the plumèd troops, and the big wars,
That makes ambition virtue! Oh, farewell!
Farewell the neighing steed, and the shrill trump,

The spirit-stirring drum, the ear-piercing fife,
The royal banner, and all quality,
Pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war!
And, O you mortal engines, whose rude throats
The immortal Jove's dread clamours counterfeit,
Farewell! Othello's occupation 's gone!"

The deep pathos of this most mournful and heart-rending farewell would have moved any human being to tears; but Iago was a devil—a fiend in human form—and he could inwardly rejoice to find his general so well under the influence of his poison, while he pretended to be struck with grief and surprise:

"Is it possible, my lord?"

Is it possible you can lose your self-control and permit yourself to be thus moved and carried away by emotion? Othello had no patience to listen to these words of commiseration. He was completely lost in wrath and pounced with lion-like fury upon the candid friend, the author of his misery, and seizing him by the throat, on pain of instant death demanded convincing proof of his "love" Desdemona's disloyalty:

"*Oth.* Villain, be sure thou prove my love a whore,
Be sure of it: give me the ocular proof;
Or, by the worth of mine eternal soul,
Thou hadst been better have been born a dog
Than answer my wak'd wrath!
Iago. Is 't come to this?
Oth. Make me to see 't; or, at the least, so prove it,
That the probation bear no hinge nor loop
To hang a doubt on; or woe upon thy life!
Iago. My noble lord,—"

How could the Moor be kind to one who, in the name of friendship, slandered a spotless wife and destroyed the happiness of the husband? The slanderer must either prove his aspersions or pay for them with his life. Iago had quite expected this situation. He allowed the lion to exhaust his fury, interrupting him but by a

short appeal uttered with well-feigned surprise and sorrow—"Is 't come to this?"—which brought him down at once from his unfair demand for "ocular proof." The proof must be at least absolutely indubitable, or woe upon his life! Iago now assumed the tone and attitude of humblest supplication and attempted to expostulate with the angry Moor: "My noble lord,—" The noble lord was at once touched by Iago's manner and tone and felt the unfair severity of his demand and the savageness of his threat. And lapsing into insoluble doubt and unable to endure the torment of it, he broke out into a most piteous and powerful, though indirect, appeal to the honour and honesty of his friend, calling upon him to remove the uncertainty—to save him from the agony—and told him of the terrible torture he had already caused and would now intensify by his hints and aspersions, which, if they were false or incorrect, would completely ensure his eternal damnation for the slander:

"If thou dost slander her and torture me,
Never pray more; abandon all remorse;
On horror's head horrors accumulate;
Do deeds to make heaven weep, all earth amaz'd:
For nothing canst thou to damnation add
Greater than that."

Any man with a human heart would have been stunned by this appeal, but honest Iago, who was deeply wounded by the general's doubt of his sincerity, could not resist the outburst of his indignation:

"O grace! O heaven, forgive me!
Are you a man? have you a soul? or sense?
God be wi' you; take mine office. Oh, wretched fool,
That liv'st to make thine honesty a vice!
Oh, monstrous world! Take note, take note, O world,
To be direct and honest is not safe.
I thank you for this profit; and from hence
I'll love no friend, sith love breeds such offence."

Insulting words, unconsciously hurled at a superior in a fit of honest indignation; an immediate sense of their impropriety and the danger they might lead to; self-condemnation for over-doing one's duty; discontentment with the world's ill reward for honesty and straightforwardness: an unceremonious turning of the back to leave the place abruptly—all in a minute and under the influence of obvious and genuine feeling! What wonder if Othello called him back at once! What wonder if the very next minute the deception of the doubting man is complete!

> "Nay, stay; thou shouldst be honest.
> *Iago.* I should be wise, for honesty 's a fool,
> And loses that it works for.
> *Oth.* By the world,
> I think my wife be honest, and think she is not;
> I think that thou art just and think thou art not.
> I'll have some proof. My name, that was as fresh
> As Dian's visage, is now begrim'd and black
> As mine own face. If there be cords, or knives,
> Poison, or fire, or suffocating streams,
> I'll not endure it. Would I were satisfied!"

Iago's indignant outburst was the finishing stroke of the villain's hypocrisy and the turning point in Othello's condition of doubt and perplexity. It had a tremendous effect on the poor husband who was writhing in uncertainty. He had come to Iago with an almost settled belief in Desdemona's honesty and in the rashness and injustice of Iago's calumny. But now, alas, he thought his wife was honest and thought she was not: he thought Iago was just and thought he was not. Rather, he was inclined to believe that Iago was just and Desdemona was not honest, for the very next second he flew from the agony of doubt, which he could not endure, and said: "I'll have some proof." Yes, Iago knew "more, much more than he unfolded" and he was undoubtedly an "honest creature." Under pressure

and out of the love he bore to him, he had made a partial revelation in the morning, but now after the treatment he was accorded for it, it would be impossible to get him to reveal any more. He was evidently in possession of "proofs," but he would rather quit service and lose his life than reveal them. Othello was morally convinced of his wife's infidelity. He would no more demand "ocular proof" of it, or such probation as bore "no hinge nor loop to hang a doubt on." He would be obliged to his friend for "*some* proof"—not for convincing himself of the woman's guilt (he had no more doubt about it, she was false as hell and her heavenly appearance was a mere mockery), but—to satisfy his conscience before he proceeded to put an end to her, for kill her he must. He had indeed thought of casting her away if he found her false—of "whistling her off" if he proved her "haggard"—but now he could only feel satisfied by putting her out of existence. Her father's prediction had proved true, too true! She had deceived him, she had proved false to him. She had not fallen a slave to passion, a victim to lust, but had deliberately abused his noble, confiding nature, pretended to love him, tempted him from his "unhoused, free condition" into the mockery of a marriage, and brought shame and dishonour on his head. From the very beginning, her love was a profession, a delusion, "the dissimulation of the vilest prostitute." She had cast dirt on his fair name,* once pure and bright "as Dian's visage," and it was impossible for him to let her go unpunished for her daring deceit. He could not endure the filth which stuck to him, he must put an end to the jade who had deceived him and disgraced him. She had taken him into the heart of hell and made him fancy it was heaven! Now,

* See note on III. iii. 386.

it was absolutely impossible for him to revoke his love, so shamefully misplaced on her, without shattering his whole being, without falling into the veriest "chaos" and "perdition." When his faith returned a short while since, when Iago's aspersions seemed rash and unjust but the doubt did not leave him, he had bidden farewell to peace and content and to his vocation. What was his fate now when the uncertainty was removed—when the angel turned out a devil! "Chaos" and "perdition!" An instant farewell to everything dear in life—to life itself! Much as suicide was a sin, he could not prolong his life. It was a punishment he richly deserved for his folly. And the drab that had trifled with him and played a shameless game with him and his life, she must go out, too. Whatever punishments might await him in the next world,*—cords, knives, poison, fire, or suffocating streams—he would not endure the dishonour brought on him, he must put an end to the demon and —to himself! He only wished, for conscience' sake, "to be satisfied" of her guilt by "*some* proof," and if the good friend would kindly forgive his harsh and ungrateful words, take pity on him, and let him have this, "*some* proof," no god on earth could prevent him from "tearing her to pieces."

Good reader! do you find it hard to realise that Othello, the happiest of husbands at ten in the morning on that fatal Sunday, became the most miserable of men by eleven, with the seeds of suspicion sown in his soul, at twelve he was in the flames of jealousy, and before it was one o'clock, he had undergone the most painful oscillation between doubt and faith, experienced the most excruciating torture, and not only accepted the infidelity of Desdemona as a moral certainty, but even decided on the extinction of his own life and hers and

* See note on III. iii. 388-90.

only waited for "some proof" of his wife's guilt! It looks like a maddening dream, this rapid work of the poison on Othello, this sudden transformation of the noble man into a ferocious beast. If the Moor had been an ordinary man of the world, he might have endured the jealousy longer, put up with his misery, and lived the life of a doubting cuckold: or, if he had been a slave to life and love and sensuality, he might have deceived himself to believe in her purity even if she had been unfaithful, and lived on happily with her and loved her as before. But his notions of honour were strict and severe. Calm and unruffled both by nature and habit, and slow to be moved by passion, he was yet easily upset by anything which cast a stain on his name, and he would sooner end his life than suffer any dishonour or disgrace to touch him. So, when the dark doubt was created in his mind about his wife's fidelity, he could not rest in suspense even for an hour: he proceeded at once to slove it one away or the other, and found himself hopelessly vacillating between faith and doubt. Indeed, he was as much on the rack of jealousy as any man by nature jealous, but being strong, he struggled, though in vain, to free himself from its torture! He had said to Iago, barely two hours since,—

> "I'll see before I doubt; when I doubt, prove:
> And on the proof there is no more but this,
> Away at once with love or jealousy!"

but he now found it was impossible to cast off jealousy though his doubt was cleared, for it returned again and again in spite of his faith and love re-established! And he knew he could not give up his love for the "excellent wretch," yet continue to live. What then was the solution? Either way, ruin and damnation awaited him. Of what avail that he was convinced of Desdemona's innocence if he had to bid farewell to peace and happi-

ness? Better far if Iago's calumny proved true and Othello had to give up love and life together. Under the uncontrollable grief and rage which followed (for he believed his wife to be pure), Othello pounced upon Iago and threatened to take his life unless he made good his aspersions by "ocular proof," or proof which was absolutely conclusive. This was indeed holding forth temptation to the devil, though the devil scarcely needed it, for he had already talked of proof, in the morning, and was now ready with "proofs." A little artful simulation of surprise and sorrow, a bit of humble supplication, and the tone and manner of an honest man: and the Moor gave up his demand, and his anger changed into agony and appeal. And Iago's *coup-de-grace*—the outburst of his honest indignation—what human actor can imitate its mighty force or produce its magic effect? It subdued Othello as if by a thunderbolt (it would have subdued the shrewdest man of the world). It once for all hammered the honesty of the speaker into the hearer's mind. It masked the divine purity of Desdemona, made the heavenly angel appear a "fair devil," and broke off the fascination which had been repeatedly restoring Othello to his love and trust. And it deprived the victim of all power of thought and judgment! Hitherto, he had wavered between doubt and faith in Desdemona: now, in an instant, he was driven to the extremity of unfaith, and the utmost recovery he might ever effect was to the plane of doubt! He begged to be favoured with "*some* proof" of his wife's guilt, for he found his name "begrim'd and black" and could not endure it but must end it by killing his wife and himself, whatever the punishments which might await him for it in hell. Indeed, Othello waited, not for evidence to solve his doubt, but for proof—"some proof"—to confirm his judgment which he was altogether impatient

to execute! And of course, but little proof would suffice to satisfy a mind so inclined. "Would I were satisfied!"

Iago marked the fall of Othello and, noting his destructive determination, proceeded to impress upon him the utter absurdity and impossibility of expecting to get "ocular proof" in such cases:

> "I see you are eaten up with passion;
> I do repent me that I put it to you.
> You would be satisfied?
> *Oth.* Would! nay, I will.
> *Iago.* And may: but, how? how satisfied, my lord?
> Would you, the supervisor, grossly gape on?
> * * *
> *Oth.* Death and damnation. Oh!
> *Iago.* It were a tedious difficulty, I think,
> To bring them to that prospect.
> * * * *
> * * What then? How then?
> What shall I say? Where's satisfaction?
> It is impossible you should see this,
> Were they as prime as goats, as hot as monkeys,
> As salt as wolves in pride, and fools as gross
> As ignorance made drunk. But yet, I say,
> If imputation and strong circumstances,
> Which lead directly to the door of truth,
> Will give you satisfaction, you might have 't.
> *Oth.* Give me a living reason she's disloyal."

A further descent from "proof"—"some proof"—to a "living *reason*." Reluctant as he was to speak any more on that unpleasant topic, the kind friend gave his first and weakest reason, which, to Othello impressed with his love and honesty, would not fail to be proof presumptive:

> "I do not like the office;
> But, sith I am enter'd in this cause so far,
> Prick'd to 't by foolish honesty and love,
> I will go on. I lay with Cassio lately;
> And, being troubled with a raging tooth,
> I could not sleep.
> There are a kind of men so loose of soul,
> That in their sleeps will mutter their affairs;

One of this kind is Cassio.
In sleep I heard him say 'Sweet Desdemona,
Let us be wary, let us hide our loves;'
And then, sir, would he gripe and wring my hand,
Cry 'O sweet creature!' and then kiss me hard,
As if he pluck'd up kisses by the roots
That grew upon my lips, lay his leg o'er my thigh,
And sigh and kiss and then cry 'Cursèd fate
That gave thee to the Moor!'
Oth. Oh, monstrous! monstrous!"

Though this was but a dream, Othello accepted it as a "living reason"—a good ground for suspicion, denoting "a foregone conclusion." "And this may help to thicken *other proofs* that do demonstrate thinly," added the cunning friend who knew that the "other proofs" which he reserved were stronger. It was enough for Othello to be told that there *were* "other proofs." He did not care to learn them, neither could he see through them and reject them as mere assertions. His conscience was satisfied! and his course was clear. Vengeance became a duty to him and he did not conceal it.

"I'll tear her all to pieces!"

What hope was there of the Moor's recovering himself from his fall? Iago could well indulge in an oblique mock at the general's demand for "ocular proof," before passing on to the next item.

"Nay, but be wise: yet we *see* nothing done;
She may be honest yet. Tell me but this,
Have you not sometimes seen a handkerchief—
Spotted with strawberries, in your wife's hand?
Oth. I gave her such a one; 't was my first gift.
Iago. I know not that; but such a handkerchief—
I am sure it was your wife's—did I to-day
See Cassio wipe his beard with."

Fancy, while the villain was reporting about the handkerchief he had seen in Cassio's hand, he had it in his own pocket! And, despite his caution in not speaking

positively of the particular one but only of *such a* handkerchief, what a narrow escape it was for the devil that Othello was not able to say to him, "Villain! you are telling a lie! I saw the handkerchief with my wife just before dinner, not quite a couple of hours since"? But Othello did not see the kerchief when the anxious wife took it out of her pocket to tie it round his head: fate was acting the devil's friend and how could he go amiss?

> "*Oth.* If it be that—
> *Iago.* If it be that, or any, it was hers.
> It speaks against her with the *other proofs.*"

Good God! other proofs still! and what proofs—what lies—the devil would have recounted if the Moor was inclined to listen, who can tell? The revelations were already become unbearably painful to Othello, and he could hear no more. Cassio, the trusted friend, to have proved so treacherous! Desdemona, the angel, to have proved a devil! and the precious handkerchief—the Moor's special gift to his wife—to have been given a-away to Cassio and to have served the base use of wiping his beard! How could Othello resist his rage? How could he love Desdemona any longer? How forgive Cassio? Oh, that his beard was burnt! Oh, that the scoundrel was cut to slices and thrown to the dogs in the city!

> "Oh, that the slave had forty thousand lives!
> One is too poor, too weak for my revenge.
> Now do I see 't is true. Look here, Iago;
> All my fond love thus do I blow to heaven.
> 'T is gone.
> Arise, black vengeance, from the hollow hell.
> Yield up, O love, thy crown and hearted throne
> To tyrannous hate! Swell, bosom, with thy fraught,
> For 't is of aspics' tongues!
> *Iago.* Yet be content.
> *Oth.* Oh, blood, blood, blood!
> *Iago.* Patience, I say; your mind perhaps may change."

The Moor thirsted for blood like a beast of the forest! He rushed about as if seeking for his prey. He burnt with bloody thoughts. No more calm for him, no more self-control was possible. No more love, but vengeance, vengeance! The infuriated man blew off his love to heaven and summoned vengeance in its place. Iago's attempts to quiet him served (and were of course meant) to excite his wrath. He could nevermore return to love. Vengeance was to him a duty. And he solemnly swore by heaven and entered into a sacred vow, dedicating himself to a "capable and wide revenge."

> "Like to the Pontic sea,
> Whose icy current and compulsive course
> Ne'er keeps retiring ebb, but sweeps due on
> To the Propontic and the Hellespont,
> Even so my bloody thoughts, with violent pace,
> Shall ne'er look back, ne'er ebb to humble love,
> Till that a capable and wide revenge
> Swallow them up. Now, by yond marble heaven,
> In the due reverence of a sacred vow [*Kneels.*
> I here engage my words."

On his knees, and swearing by the marble heaven at which he looked from the verandah, Othello vowed vengeance against Cassio and Desdemona! And before he rose, Iago knelt and included himself in the vow and with greater solemnity—with hands uplifted and eyes closed, invoking at once the sun, the moon, and the stars above, and the elements around, to witness his sacred pledge!

> "Do not rise yet.— [*Kneels.*
> Witness, you ever-burning lights above
> You elements that clip us round about,
> Witness that here Iago doth give up
> The execution of his wit, hands, heart,
> To wrong'd Othello's service! Let him command,
> And to obey shall be in me remorse,
> What bloody business ever." [*They rise.*

Iago's love and pity for "wrong'd Othello" induced him

to take a solemn vow that he would devote himself—head, hands, and heart,—to his friend's service and do "what bloody business ever" he might command. God-fearing as he was (for he held it the "very stuff o' the conscience to do no contriv'd murder"), he was prepared to do the most atrocious deed to avenge Othello's wrong and would not feel any remorse while doing it; on the contrary, he would be goaded by an inclination to obey his friend.* Othello at once accepted both the love and the suggestion of good Iago; for within three days, he said, he liked to hear from his friend's lips that Cassio was not alive. Shocked as he was by this request (Othello did not fail to notice it), Iago promised his immediate compliance, but begged the general to let Desdemona live:

> "My friend is dead; 'tis done at your request:
> But let her live."

Of course, Iago knew he was not safe until Desdemona was likewise dispatched, and he knew, too, his pleading for her life would only exasperate the angry husband against her. And he was not wrong, for Othello decided to kill her and requested Iago to go in with him, that they might converse more secretly:

> "Damn her, lew'd minx! Oh, damn her! damn her!
> Come, go with me apart; I will withdraw
> To furnish me with some swift means of death
> For the fair devil. Now are thou my lieutenant.
> *Iago.* I am your own for ever."

And both the general and the lieutenant withdrew together to settle their plans. And lieutenant, indeed, Iago now was to Othello, in a double sense!

* See note on III. iii. 468-9.

VIII

What did the general and the lieutenant consult together in the privacy of the chamber into which they retired? Iago, we may be sure, never repeated his recommendation to spare Desdemona, neither would he have tried to save Cassio, much as the Florentine was his friend, for he felt Othello's wrong as his own, and was not the man to retract his word—to break his solemn pledge! The scoundrel was of course greatly disappointed that Othello would not remain on the rack of jealousy even for a couple of hours, but it was lucky the general's bloody thoughts had been averted from him to the right persons, and he knew his own safety was not ensured until Cassio and Desdemona were no more. What did Othello intend to do after the murder of the innocents? Did he expect that no notice would be taken of it, that everything would go on as smoothly as before? or was he "stone-blind to the future"? or would he kill himself? Anyway, Iago felt certain, there was fun for him. He was not, however, left long in suspense, for Othello grasped the lieutenant's hand immediately both entered the room, and with tears overflowing and in gentlest touching tones, told him of his resolution. It was impossible for him to survive the disgrace that had fallen to his lot and the shock he had received. He had already told his farewell to peace and happiness and everything he valued in life, and he could not live one minute after the delinquents' death was accomplished. Their murder was an act of justice, which it was ordained he should execute, and his own death was a proper punishment for his folly.

Iago was stunned to hear this—he almost swooned. He stared a blank look, unable to utter a word. "I

should punish myself, too, for my folly," said he at length, in a tremulous tone, "I should. Grant but this favour to me, as a friend,—kill me with your own hand ere you kill yourself." And he bent his neck before his general, forgetting in his grief the task he was to do before the final event he prayed for.

Othello was deeply touched by Iago's words and action. "No, Iago!" said he, lifting up the devoted friend, "you *must* live after me to tell the tale of my bloody deeds, and to prevent any commotion they might create and any danger to the state which I have so long served and loved. You must."

Iago closed his eyes for a minute and begged the general to flee to Mauritania and save himself. He would stay behind for a while to explain the strange incidents and would follow him soon after.

"Tush, man!" ejaculated Othello reprovingly, "I am no coward to run away. No, Iago, I *must* die: it is settled. And you are to step into my place and preserve peace and order— mark, you are my *lieutenant!* Go, nerve yourself to do your part!"

Iago left the place, with a cheerless countenance, discontented with his friend's resolution.

IX

It is just one o'clock. The entertainment is still continuing. The sweet notes of the piano reveal the gentle touch of the player. The divine form of Desdemona once again before Othello's mind! Good heavens! how is he going to kill her? *Can* she be impure? What horrible sin is he going to commit? What rash vow has he made? * * Iago's indignant outburst resounds in Othello's ears! His revelations are recalled. A thrill through the very soul of Othello! Oh, the weak-

ness of man before woman! Avaunt, deceitful wretch! Avaunt, fair devil! Away, kindness and love! Arise, black vengeance! * * The angry lion paces up and down the room. He will forthwith pounce upon his prey and tear it to pieces. Give away the handkerchief! his special gift! Produce it, or pay for it with life! Now! this very moment! * * Patience! Patience! The traitor, who made bold to touch his friend's wife, received the handkerchief from her, wiped his beard with it!—oh, *he* must be off first! Well, let Cassio be done to death, and the very next moment, the fair devil shall be safe in hell! Patience awhile! * * Othello is exhausted with the waves of passion and emotion. He reclines on the couch and lapses into a doze. Ha! the sweet strains now in his ears, next in his soul! Ah, sweetest lark, singest thou the savageness out of the bear! * * A brief hour's repose, and Othello wakes up calm and refreshed. The wild beast transformed again into man! The handkerchief indeed haunts him, but he will ask his wife for it. He will talk to her kindly and lovingly, and conduct himself henceforth calmly and humanely. The entertainment was over and the guests were all gone: and he can go see Desdemona immediately.

X

The entertainment closed a little before two o'clock. After taking leave of the guests who were immensely pleased with the hospitality and attentions they had received, Desdemona looked into the chamber of her lord to enquire how he was doing, but finding him asleep, went into her own and began to search for her handkerchief. She thought she had it in the pocket of her gown, but found it missing a short while since, and

could not know how and where she could have lost it. She had it with her at eleven o'clock when she fetched her lord to dinner, and she had not since gone anywhere, except for a minute into her chamber, before going to the banquet. Had she put it back in her chest, or in the drawer she opened for the soothing balm which she wished to give to her lord? Her mind was somewhat perturbed at the time, and now she could not guess where she had mislaid the precious gift. She was certain she had not dropped it in the verandah where she met her lord, for she distinctly remembered having put it back in her pocket, after she offered to tie it round his head. Sure, it could not have been lost and must be found somewhere on a more minute and careful search.

Desdemona then walked into the verandah and, happening to meet the Clown, sent word by him to Cassio, asking him to go there:

> "Seek him, bid him come hither; tell him I have moved my lord on his behalf, and hope all will be well."

She was indeed feeling quite happy that her lord had at length granted her request in the morning and promised to take back the lieutenant at once, and she was glad, too, Montano had spoken at the dinner in favour of Cassio's restoration. She knew how very depressed the poor man was feeling on account of his deferred hope, and she now wished not only to comfort him by the communication of the good news but to effect his reconciliation with her lord, immediately he came out from his chamber. Her mind was, however, troubled about the missing handkerchief and she renewed her search in the room, in the corridor, and in the verandah, and asked her maid if she could suggest where she could have lost it:

> "Where should I lose the handkerchief, Emilia?
> *Emil.* I know not, madam."

Alas, Emilia! Alas, loving maid and fearing wife! How very different would have been your reply if you could have foreseen the fatal consequences it was destined to work! Reader, do not be hard upon a poor maid-servant, and demand from her the morals, so often missed in higher ranks. A more loving and faithful maid than Emilia you could not find, and if circumstances betrayed her into a falsehood, set it down, pray, for a venial slip. She knew very well that her mistress loved the token, that the Moor had conjured her to keep it carefully, that she ever reserved it with her as a dear treasure; yet, in spite of herself, the good maid, had, in a most unfortunate moment, parted with it to her troublesome husband. *"I know not, madam"*—but certain, she hoped to finish the strawberries on the duplicate before evening and somehow substitute it for the original in her husband's hands, or if that was not possible, to find the duplicate itself in some corner for Desdemona! And she could not think that any great calamity would occur in the mean time. Desdemona indeed hinted the evil consequences which the loss of the precious token might occasion:

> "Believe me, I had rather have lost my purse
> Full of crusadoes; and, but my noble Moor
> Is true of mind and made of no such baseness
> As jealous creatures are, it were enough
> To put him to ill thinking."

But the assurance that the Moor was *not* a jealous man prevented the maid from apprehending any immediate danger; yet, somewhat frightened by her mistress's words, she asked her "Is he not jealous?" The reassuring reply she received settled the conduct of Emilia, and the fate of both the mistress and the maid!

> "Who, he? I think the sun where he was born
> Drew all such humours from him."

How different might have been the course of events if simple Desdemona could have suspected jealousy in her lord, or if the maid had not been given the misleading assurance!

Just at the moment, Othello was stepping thither, and the loving wife at once advanced to meet him and enquired if his headache was better. She was glad she had sent word to Cassio, for she could now get him into the favour of her lord:

> "I will not leave him now till Cassio
> Be call'd to him.—How is 't with you, my lord?
> *Oth.* Well, my good lady.—[*Aside*] Oh, hardness to dissemble!—
> How do you, Desdemona?
> *Des.* Well, my good lord."

Indeed, Othello found it no easy matter "to dissemble." It was not in his nature to harbour suspicion and distrust yet speak lovingly and confidingly. He came to Desdemona to ask her for the handkerchief, and how good it had been if he had disclosed to her what he had been told about it! But he had become a victim to jealousy, much as he rebelled against it, and it preyed upon his noble mind and stooped him to tricks and devices. An hour since, Iago had sent him to the plane of unfaith and screwed him to a murderous resolution, but a little rest and repose brought him again into the region of doubt and suspicion, and he wished to know the truth for himself, if possible. He would demand the handkerchief from Desdemona, but, before asking her for it, he would pretend to read a lustful and licentious character for her in her hand and watch its effect upon her. It would pass for a merry joke if she was innocent, but if she was at all affected by his chiromantic revelations, woe upon her if the handkerchief was missing and confirmed her wickedness! But no sooner had he found himself in the presence of the earthly angel whose

innocence and heavenliness had become part of his being than he discovered it was hard "to dissemble." Indeed, how could he act meanly and hypocritically to one whose very look spoke nobility, sincerity, and love, whom four hours back, when his mind was free from poison, he had loved and worshipped! Oh, wretchedness! Oh, distracting dream! Oh, evil instigation! Not all the divine fascination of the wife could restore the unhappy husband to his faith. And hard as he found it to dissemble, he responded to the spur of jealousy and proceeded to read his wife's hand:

> "Give me your hand. This hand is moist, my lady.
> *Des.* It yet hath felt no age nor known no sorrow."

Poor, innocent child! How could she understand the oblique insinuation about a moist, sweaty palm being indicative of sensuality and lust?* And how could she think any hint of suspicion would fall from the lips of her loving lord, whom, just a minute back, she praised to her maid as one who was "true of mind and made of no such baseness as jealous creatures are"? The innocent simplicity of her reply was touching in the extreme. She was no expert at repartee. As a matter of fact, her hand was *not* moist,—it was warm and soft and delicate and lovely: but her lord had said it *was* moist, and she could only attribute it to her youth and happy life—"*It hath felt no age nor known no sorrow.*" Indeed, she might well say so, for she was yet a blooming rose, and much as her father's wrath had made her feel miserable for a while, his subsequent kindness (as she believed) wiped it off her memory, and she was happy as the happiest daughter of heaven. And fate had kindly hid from her both the heart-broken condition of her father and his death! Why might she not meet her lord's strange remark about her hand by a

* See note on III. iv. 37.

simple admission about herself?—"It hath felt no age nor known no sorrow." Othello was touched by the childish simplicity of the reply, yet he proceeded with his cruel chiromancy:

> "This argues fruitfulness and liberal heart—
> Hot, hot, and moist. This hand of yours requires
> A sequester from liberty, fasting and prayer,
> Much castigation, exercise devout;
> For here 's a young and sweating devil—here—
> That commonly rebels. 'T is a good hand,
> A frank one."

Innocent Desdemona did not understand this mystic talk of her lord. He was evidently in a merry mood, and she was glad of it, for he had been but now ill at ease. She replied only to the last words which complimented her hand "as a good hand, a frank one:"

> "You may, indeed, say so;
> For 't was that hand that gave away my heart.
> *Oth.* A liberal hand! The hearts of old gave hands.
> But our new heraldry is hands, not hearts." *

More mystic still to simple Desdemona! Hands and hearts and new heraldry!—ho, what was this? Like a child who discards a difficult puzzle, she dropped the topic, and lovingly asked her lord about his promise:

> "I cannot speak of this. Come now, your promise.
> *Oth.* What promise, chuck?
> *Des.* I have sent to bid Cassio come speak with you."

The unkindness of his obscure hits came home to Othello: he felt as if he was accusing a child of treachery and incontinence. How heartless to make her a victim to his cruel suspicions! What evil spirit was cheating him to imagine his heaven to be hell! Oh, the child-like looks, full of trust and love! the guileless speech, full of sweetest innocence and ignorance! the tender helplessness which appealed for support and begged him

* See note on III. iv. 45-6.

to speak of his promise! Othello's heart was torn with pity, and his lips could only speak with parental kindness—"What promise, chuck?" Scarcely had he uttered those words than his own nerves responded to them, and the chaos he was courting and the cruel deeds he was contemplating flashed upon his soul. He felt inclined to press the baby to his bosom, and weep! for he returned in that instant to the plane of love and faith. But the handkerchief haunted him still, and he would dispose of his doubt and allow his tears to flow. Perhaps it was with her, perhaps she had lost it, but it was impossible she had given it away! Anyhow, he would clear his mind about it; he would ask for it, to wipe his eyes with, for he was troubled with "a salt and sorry rheum" (tears were collecting in his eyes in spite of himself); and alas! the unhappy man tilted again into doubt and suspicion! Oh, the oscillations of jealousy!

"*Oth.* I have a salt and sorry rheum offends me:
Lend me thy handkerchief.
Des. Here, my lord.
Oth. That which I gave you.
Des. I have it not about me.
Oth. Not?
Des. No, indeed, my lord?
Oth. That is a fault.
That handkerchief
Did an Egyptian to my mother give;*
She was a charmer, and *could almost read*
The thoughts of people: she told her, while she kept it,
'T would make her amiable and subdue my father
Entirely to her love, but if she lost it
Or *made a gift of it,* my father's eye
Should hold her loathèd and his spirits should hunt
After new fancies. She dying gave it me;
And bid me, when my fate would have me wiv'd,
To give it her. I did so: and take heed on 't;
Make it a darling like your precious eye:
To lose it or *give't away* were such perdition

* See note on V. ii. 216.

As nothing else could match.
Des. Is 't possible?
Oth. 'Tis true; there's magic in the web of it.
A sibyl, that had number'd in the world
The sun to course two hundred compasses,
In her prophetic fury sew'd the work;
The worms were hallow'd that did breed the silk;
And it was dy'd in mummy which the skilful
Conserv'd of maidens' hearts.
Des. Indeed, is 't true?
Oth. Most veritable; therefore look to 't well.
Des. Then would to heaven that I had never seen 't!
Oth. Ha! wherefore?
Des. Why do you speak so startingly and rash?
Oth. Is 't lost? is 't gone? speak, is it out of the way?
Des. Heaven bless us!
Oth. Say you?
Des. It is not lost; but what an if it were?
Oth. How!
Des. I say, it is not lost.
Oth. Fetch't, let me see 't.

Under the influence of jealousy, Othello thus made a second attempt "to dissemble!" He had tried to learn the truth about his suspicion by professing to read Desdemona's character in her hand, but it only impressed on him the cruelty of his conduct and restored him, for a moment, to love and faith. Immediately after, however, when Desdemona did not produce the handkerchief, which was his special gift, but told him she "had it not about her," the poor man again slipped into doubt, and jealousy renewed its biting and stooped him again to mean artifices to know the truth! He described the virtues of the handkerchief and the danger consequent on its non-possession, in language which was undoubtedly exaggerated, and which, he intended, should frighten the girl into a confession of the truth, if indeed she had given away the token. He began with an irrelevent reference to the Egyptian charmer's power of *reading the thoughts of people,* but he had an object in doing so. Let Desdemona fancy that her lord who had indirectly

received a favour from a thought-reading charmer was likewise in possession of some talisman which enabled him to read others' thoughts, then, sure, Othello could watch the effect of it on her countenance, for she would grow pale with fear if she was guilty. But this clever idea no more solved the husband's doubt than his chiromancy, for innocent Desdemona merely looked a blank look at him whilst he spoke. Truly, jealousy is no respecter of persons, and one device failing, the jaundiced husband resorted to another! Chiromancy had failed to help him. The suggestion of thought-reading power in him, failed, too. He now aimed a nearer hit, and repeated it—all with a view to watch the effect on the suspected wife! Oh, the pitiable efforts of a noble soul poisoned with a most ignoble feeling! The husband talked to the wife about the loss or *gift* of the charmed handkerchief. If she lost it, or *made a gift of it*, she was bound to lose her husband's love! To lose it or *give't away* were such perdition as nothing else could match! A sly emphasis on '*gift*' and '*give,*' to watch its effect on the wife—but it failed to furnish any certain clue to the husband to solve his doubt. Alas, the crash commenced in the noble character! Othello must either permit its progress, or fight against it at the sacrifice of his life—and his wife! Desdemona started at the reference (made and repeated) to the danger of *losing* the handkerchief, but she was unmoved by the reference, which followed (after some pause), to the danger of *giving it away*. Could it be that she had *lost* the handkerchief? or was it that Othello was not a good reader of facial expression?

Desdemona was truly frightened by the strange fears which Othello conjured to her mind? Was it possible that the loss of that handkerchief could mean such perdition to her? Was her loving lord going to "loathe"

her, if indeed she had lost it? And was it that she had been "amiable" to him and enjoyed his love because of the charmed possession? What had her love or his to do with charms and talismans? Certain, Othello was joking. He had pleased himself with mystic utterances about her hand, and now he was saying mystic things about the handkerchief! He was evidently in a merry mood; but he spoke in such a serious tone that the poor girl was frightened somewhat, and she asked him, "Is 't possible?" Is it possible that you—my kind and loving lord—can "loathe" me and "hunt after new fancies" (if I am so unfortunate as to have lost the handkerchief)? Is it possible that its loss can mean such perdition? Desdemona's fear and surprise related only to the evil consequences of the *loss*: the consequences of a *gift* never touched her mind. But her words were few and vague, and the jealousy-spurred husband, misinterpreting her fear, at once proceeded to exaggerate the mystic powers of the handkerchief, hoping thereby to frighten her into a confession of the truth. Had Othello told her nothing more than the evil consequences of a *gift* of the handkerchief, had he told her simply that *to give it away* involved utter perdition, Desdemona would not have been frightened in the least, and she would have told her lord, at once—"You don't frighten me, my lord, by your words, for I have *not* given it away, nor would I ever!" Or, if Desdemona had spoken her fear more plainly and asked her lord, "Is 't possible the loss of the handkerchief can mean to me the loss of your love?", there would have been no tragedy. But fear had upset the one, and jealousy the other: how could they escape misunderstanding and misfortune?

Did Othello invent the tale of "the magic in the web" of the handkerchief, or was it a tale he had been

told? If he invented it, it was an easy product of the jealousy which had begun its work in him and stooped him already to low "fishing." He had attempted to solve his doubt by a direct pretence at chiromancy, by an indirect suggestion of thought-reading, and by a discovery of the danger consequent on the handkerchief's loss or *gift* (the last an intentional addition of his own!) The simple, frank, open-hearted man strove hard against his very nature to act the sly, designing dissembler! What wonder if, writhing under an ignoble feeling he could not endure, the noble Moor indulged in exaggeration, or even falsehood, to find a means for settling his doubt! However that might have been, his description of the magic powers of the handkerchief, of the bicentenarian sibyl who had sewn its strawberries, of the hallowed worms that had bred its silk, and of the maidens' hearts which had supplied its dye—all these frightened the imaginative girl, and she could no longer doubt the seriousness of her lord's words. She could only ask in a tone of profoundest fear and surprise,—"Indeed! is 't true?" And the reply she received drove her into a helpless prayer:

"Then would to heaven that I had never seen it!"

The possibility of her missing handkerchief having been lost, and of her losing the love of her lord in consequence, threw the poor wife into "chaos." What was her life worth without her lord's love? It was no charm or talisman which had united their hearts, and oh, why should they be separated for no fault of theirs! Was it for this she had received the gift from her loving lord, and he from his dear mother? Would to heaven she had never seen the handkerchief! Would that their loves had lived and grown together without the help of this dangerous friend!

Othello misinterpreted the fear of Desdemona, and, suspecting something wrong about the handkerchief he had given her, he assumed a most furious look and in a threatening tone demanded her to explain why she wished she had never seen it: "Ha! wherefore?" The poor girl was startled by the rash and violent gesture of her lord. He had never exhibited such a temper to her before. Was it the beginning of the evil end which the missing handkerchief was destined to lead to? She hoped it was not, and hoped, too, the handkerchief was not lost: and in a tone whose timidity and surprise proclaimed her innocence, she asked her lord—

"Why do you speak so startingly and rash?"

Othello's fury melted away as if by magic and his look became calm. Impatient as he was, it struck him he had frightened the simple girl by his words, and now he asked her kindly, coaxingly, yet anxiously:

"Is 't lost? is 't gone? speak, is 't out of the way?"

How unfortunate that Desdemona did not tell him—"It is missing, my lord; I hope I have not lost it. I had it with me just before dinner when I offered to tie it round your head." But the devil was destined to triumph, and Desdemona's lips would not give out the simple fact. She was in doubt as to whether her lord was joking or in earnest. She paused for a minute. She could not believe that he was joking, that his fury was but sport, that he had alarmed her by a fictitious tale: for, mild as were his last words, they contained an anxious enquiry about the handkerchief and accelerated her fear. And she gave no direct answer to her lord, but simply exclaimed, "Heaven bless us!"—God save us both from calamity, if indeed the handkerchief has been lost! She however believed it was not lost.

Othello spoke again in a tone of fury—"Say you?" He evidently assumed the loss of the handkerchief and was beginning to fulfil the fatal prediction, thought the simple wife. And, to prevent all mishap, she at once gave her lord the assurance that the handkerchief was *not* lost, yet she anxiously asked him if its loss could really lead to the evil consequence he mentioned.

"It is not lost: but what an if it were?"

She had already wondered how the loss of the handkerchief could *possibly* extinguish her lord's love for her. She had asked him again—"Indeed! is it true?" And when told that it was indeed most veritable, she wished she had never seen the handkerchief and invoked the blessing of heaven against the consequences of its loss. Now, she assured her lord that it was *not* lost, yet she was anxious to know if the tale he told her about its magic powers was a true one.

"How!" exclaimed Othello who was quite puzzled by the wavering and somewhat suspicious assurance, and his fury was not in the least abated. The frightened wife, to put an end to her lord's impatience and vehemence, at once gave him an unqualified assurance: "I say, it is *not* lost." Indeed, she did not think it *was* lost, or lost irrecoverably. She had either mislaid it or dropped it somewhere (the last seemed most unlikely to her mind), and she was sure to discover it upon further search, or get it back from the finder. She had not gone out of the castle since dinner-time, and none but friends and honest persons were moving there. Then, why should she fear that the handkerchief was lost (as she did a few minutes since, when she asked Emilia about it) and why should she permit her lord to think so and create a gratuitous trouble? She was sure it was *not* lost and said so most positively: "I say,

it is *not* lost." How fortunate it had been if she had added a few words!—"I have mislaid it somewhere and am sure to find it upon search." But she feared to make the addition lest her lord's fury might continue, and she felt sure of finding the handkerchief directly. Let us pity the poor wife for her foolish confidence and for the cruel fate which pursued her, but let us not charge her with 'falsehood' or 'deceit,' 'prevarication' or 'tergiversation,' 'evasion' or 'faltering from the truth.' Had she believed that the handkerchief was irrecoverably lost, accept it, kind reader, she would, despite her fear and confusion, at once have confessed it to her lord, and prayed him to think of some means of averting its evil consequences.

The downright assurance of Desdemona, that the handkerchief was *not* lost, drove off the fury from Othello, and he spoke again in a gentle tone: "Fetch't, let me see 't." Ordinarily, he would have accepted her word as gospel truth and not insisted on verification; but now his mind was poisoned, and the mere assurance that the handkerchief was not lost did not satisfy him. Not *lost*—was it *given* away? He almost felt sure it was not, yet he would like to see it and set his doubt at rest once for all. Desdemona was of course unable to fetch the handkerchief at once, yet would have gone in immediately to search for it, and, to account for her delay in returning, have told her lord that she had mislaid it: but her kind heart and simplicity interfered to work her ruin. She had that morning felt Cassio's trouble as her own and obtained a promise from her lord to take him back into service, and she was glad to find that at the banquet everybody was in favour of his reappointment; and she had just now sent for him and he would be there presently. Why did her lord, when she reminded him of his promise and told him she had

"sent to bid Cassio come speak with him," divert her from her suit and ask her for her handkerchief, pretending to require it for wiping his eyes with? And why did he insist on getting the handkerchief which was his gift, frighten her with a most alarming account of its magic powers, and alternately exhibit a most furious and a most gentle temper and tone and look towards her? It had never been his way before, and he was evidently retaliating upon her for her upbraiding of him in the morning when she urged Cassio's reinstatement. What a simpleton she was she could not know this at once! It was now quite clear to her, and her lord might fume and roar and threaten ever so much, she would talk to him in a merry vein and press her suit and would "not leave him" until Cassio came and was ordered back to his post. And so she did, the unsuspecting wife, despite the frantic yells of her lord, thrice repeated in terrible tones,—the handkerchief! the handkerchief! the handkerchief!

> "*Des.* I say, it is not lost.
> *Oth.* Fetch 't, let me see 't.
> *Des.* Why, so I can: but I will not now.
> This is a trick to put me from my suit;
> Pray you, let Cassio be receiv'd again.
> *Oth.* Fetch me the handkerchief; my mind misgives.
> *Des.* Come, come.
> You'll never meet a more sufficient man.
> *Oth.* The handkerchief!
> *Des.* I pray, talk me of Cassio.
> *Oth.* The handkerchief!
> *Des.* A man that all his time
> Hath founded his good fortunes on your love,
> Shar'd dangers with you,—
> *Oth.* The handkerchief!
> *Des.* In sooth, you are to blame.
> *Oth.* Away!" [*Exit.*

Desdemona gently caught hold of her lord's hand as she uttered the last words, but he pushed her away

violently and burst out of the place in a most furious manner. Emilia, who was all the while at a distance, was startled by Othello's loud cries for the handkerchief and, fearing some act of violence on her mistress, ran to her, and pooh-poohed her innocent opinion of the jealous husband:

"Is not this man jealous?"

Barely five minutes back, Desdemona had told her that the Moor was not a jealous man, that "the sun where he was born drew all such humours from him," but it now appeared he was not merely jealous but rash and passionate! "Is not this man jealous?"—Can you still think your husband is not jealous? The loving maid pitied her gentle mistress and felt that her fate was not much better than her own.

Desdemona could not think that her lord was accessible to jealousy—she had "given him no cause" for it. The terrible truth however dawned on her that he was enraged, that his fury was not feigned; and she blamed herself for her levity and felt that further advocation of Cassio's suit was, for the moment, out of tune. Worst of all, in spite of the strong belief she had entertained even now that her handkerchief was *not* lost, the feeling was suddenly established in her that it *was* lost and that her search for it would be vain. Indeed, her lord's unprecedented wrath and fury (of which she had no further doubt) were intelligible to her, only as the consequence of the loss. Alas, alas! was it lost? Was her lord going to "loathe" her and desert her? Was there no means of averting the evil consequence, no way of appeasing the anger of her lord?

"I ne'er saw this before.
Sure, there is some wonder in this handkerchief;
I am most unhappy in the loss of it."

Emilia would not however accept the charitable view of her mistress. It was nonsense to think that the handkerchief could have so upset him, and what a change indeed! He had worshipped his wife almost as a goddess these four weeks, but now he fell foul of her and behaved to her like a brute—all for a handkerchief! Her own husband had treated her in just the same fashion, but she was feeling glad her beloved mistress was happily married. Oh, the delusion! The Moor, it now became clear, was as bad as any other man, and his sefish, mistrusting disposition betrayed itself in a single month!

> "'Tis not a year or two shows us a man:
> They are all but stomachs, and we all but food;
> They eat us hungerly, and when they are full
> They belch us."

This was her experience with Iago. It was the same with Othello. How monstrous he should so frighten the poor lady, for a mere trifle! Had she "forsook so many noble matches, her father, and her country, and her friends," to fall a prey to this wild beast! The good maid was quite disgusted with men—with husbands—as a class, and she heartily wished neither she nor her beloved mistress had run themselves into the jaws of matrimony. But what was she to do now to save her from trouble? Was it any good to confess to her she had found the handkerchief and given it to her husband? Better she should try at once to recover it from him and restore it to her; and perhaps he would give it back if she told him of the trouble that had arisen, for, she knew, he loved the general and his wife and ever had their happiness at heart. Besides, he had strictly injoined her not to be "acknown on 't," and he would be chiding her and abusing her all her life if she disobeyed him. Yes, it was best she should go to him presently

and somehow coax him to give back the handkerchief. This thought had struck her almost instinctively even as she perceived her mistress's trouble, but before she set out in quest of her husband, he was himself coming there in the company of Cassio.

XI

Iago had no time since morning to go to his friend, the dissmissed lieutenant, and learn the particulars of his interview with Desdemona. He was with the general until eleven o'clock and then went to his lodging and dined. It was a busy day for Emilia at the castle and she could not give him the pleasure of her company. So, he finished his dinner sooner than usual and was getting ready to go to Cassio, when a call came from the general and he was urgently wanted at the castle. He was indeed puzzled for a minute, for it was barely past twelve and he could not feel absolutely certain that his mischief might not turn against him. He was, however, in luck's way and presently came by a most unexpected find—the handkerchief he had so long desired to get into his hands—nay, he made a most triumphant march in his evil campaign, for the Moor gave him order for the murder of Cassio and was solemnly determined to put an end to his faithless wife and—to himself! How can the devil help being delighted with this most dazzling success of his diablerie? At one o'clock, he went straight from the general to Cassio's lodging, to chat with the friend and somehow drop the handkerchief in the place: and oh, luck upon luck, good Cassio was enjoying his midday nap—he had nothing better to do and sweet sleep was a welcome relief from anxiety. Iago quietly threw the handkerchief into the room and walked away to his place!

For one full hour, the devil carefully contemplated his situation to settle his immediate course. The general had indeed given him order for dispatching his treacherous friend within "three days," and had taken a solemn vow not to permit his "bloody thoughts" to "look back" or "ebb to humble love." But it was just possible—nay, probable, under the soothing influence of his wife—his mood might change, and it was dangerous to keep the matter hanging fire when mutual explanations might expose the deception any moment. The Moor, he was sorry to find, could not long be kept stretched on the rack of jealousy, and the same impatience which had precipitated him into a murderous resolve might drive him to seek personal explanations. He should needs prevent this, and administer, too, further and worse doses of poison to the willing victim, and what was most important, he should finish off Cassio that very night, for delay was dangerous. A message to the general that the deed was done, and the rest was bound to follow. The witch of Venice would be no more, and her dear lord would follow at her heels! And Iago—Iago, the poor ancient and acting lieutenant— would, on the morrow following, be General of the Venetian troops and Governor of Cyprus, *pro tempore!* Hurrah to the new General! But he must yet contain himself, for there is many a slip between the cup and the lip. How was he to get rid of Cassio? * * Yes, that was the best course. It must be accomplished through the "poor trash of Venice," and he was a pest, too, that should be got rid off. It was a clear game and should easily result in the death of both! The moon would set that night between twelve and one (it was the eighth day of the lunar month). He should tell Cassio to go to Bianca's after nightfall. (Cassio was himself impatient to renew the visits to his

mistress and had stopped away these seven days after the no-moon night, under the special advice of his friend). And he should fashion his return to fall after darkness set in. So, so: it *was* a clear game. But he should see that nothing went amiss before that hour and should arm himself with fresh weapons to vanquish the Moor, if at all he should recover himself. And the fertile brain of the fiend was forging these weapons when he heard a tap at the door, and the call which followed informed him that his friend Cassio was come to see him.

"Holloa, good lad! I was just going to see you."

"Happy news, Iago! She has sent to bid me go speak with her. She has moved the general on my behalf and hopes all will be well. And I am going to her and have called here, on my way, just to tell you the good tidings."

"I am so glad to hear the news," said the friend congratulatingly. "I am glad your trouble is over. But wait a minute, I will go with you to the castle to witness your instant reinstatement." (Of course, he had his private reason for going there—he wished to ascertain his own position.)

"And look here!" said the jubilant suitor, showing the handkerchief, "look, what a rare thing I found near my wardrobe just as I learnt the welcome news and went to don my dress! Whose can it be, I wonder."

A chill crept through Iago's nerves as he heard the last words. He was glad Cassio did not know it was Desdemona's handkerchief. It was given her by the Moor on the night of the secret wedding, at the Sagittary, and since that time Cassio had no opportunity of visiting the lady frequently. But suppose he had seen the handkerchief with her at any of his several interviews—Iago had never calculated this contingency and he thanked his star for his narrow escape.

"Good luck, my boy!" said Iago, recovering himself instantly, "Good luck, to be sure. A pretty kerchief! Give it your mistress, give it her to-night. Poor creature, she must be dying to see you!"

"Yes," replied the innocent dupe, "the wench will be expecting me almost. She allowed me but a week's absence!"

In a couple of minutes, both friends were on their way to the castle, and just as they approached the verandah where Desdemona was seated, Iago repeated his advice to Cassio:

> "There is no other way; 't is she must do 't:
> And, lo, the happiness! go, and impórtune her."

Desdemona found herself in a most awkward predicament when Cassio arrived, for she had sent for him but was now in no mood to speak to anybody. She however attempted to subdue her grief and explain the situation to him, but her very first words were so disappointing that the poor supplicant could only reiterate his humble appeal.

> "*Des.* How now, good Cassio! what's the news with you?
> *Cas.* Madam, my former suit: I do beseech you
> That by your virtuous means I may again
> Exist, and be a member of his love
> Whom I with all the office of my heart
> Entirely honour; I would not be delay'd.
> If my offence were of such mortal kind
> That nor my service past nor present sorrows
> Nor purpos'd merit in futurity
> Can ransom me into his love again,
> But to know so must be my benefit,
> So shall I clothe me in a forc'd content,
> And shut myself up in some other course
> To fortune's alms."

Cassio had come there with the full hope of his immediate restoration: indeed, the message brought by the Clown had distinctly given him that hope. How

could he help feeling disconcerted by the rather cold and formal enquiry of the good lady—"How now, good Cassio! what's the news with you?"

What was the news with him? He had nothing new to tell, but only his old story—his "former suit" to renew. He had waited long enough and "would not be delay'd." If his offence was considered altogether unpardonable—as he was led to think by the postponement of his restoration, in spite of hopes given—and if neither his past services, nor his present penitence, nor the future good conduct and service he would promise, could recommend his reinstatement, he should like to be told so, once for all, that he might betake himself to some other line of life. Indeed, that very morning Cassio had pleaded to the lady in the same strain and referred to his "love and services" and she had pitied his utter dejected condition and pledged herself to be his "solicitor" even to the death. And now that matters went topsy-turvy—all in the space of ten minutes!—she felt quite as sorry for Cassio as for herself:

> "Alas, thrice-gentle Cassio!
> My advocation is not now in tune;
> My lord is not my lord, nor should I know him,
> Were he in favour as in humour alter'd.
> So help me every spirit sanctified,
> As I have spoken for you all my best
> And stood within the blank of his displeasure
> For my free speech! You must awhile be patient:
> What I can do I will; and more I will
> Than for myself I dare: let that suffice you."

Cassio certainly forgot his own trouble in the sympathy he felt for his kind solicitor, while Iago could not bring himself to believe that Othello was angry:

> "Can he be angry? I have seen the cannon
> When it hath blown his ranks into the air
> And, like the devil, from his very arm
> Puff'd his own brother;—and is he angry?

Something of moment then: I will go meet him;
There's matter in 't indeed, if he be angry.
Des. I prithee, do so.—" [*Exit Iago.*

Iago found a good excuse for leaving the place. He had learnt that his position was secure, that his poison was working on very well, and he should, if possible, see the Moor and accelerate its effect by an additional dose. "Can he be angry?"—what surprise, what genuine grief the arch-hypocrite feigned, and what malicious triumph he felt in his inmost heart! Doubtless, it was something of very great moment to him if Othello had left his wife "in strange unquietness" and anger, and there was "matter in 't indeed" for him to hasten to the general at once. But Desdemona was too simple to detect the hypocrisy and felt thankful to him for the friendly services he might render by way of appeasing her lord. "I prithee, do so." And she found a ready explanation of her lord's strange behaviour:

"Something, sure, of state,
Either from Venice or some unhatch'd practice
Made démonstrable here in Cyprus to him,
Hath puddled his clear spirit; and in such cases
Men's natures wrangle with inferior things,
Though great ones are their object. 'T is even so;
For let our finger ache, and it indues
Our other heathful members even to that sense
Of pain: nay, we must think men are not gods,
Nor of them look for such observancy
As fits the bridal. Beshrew me much, Emilia,
I was, unhandsome warrior as I am,
Arraigning his unkindness with my soul;
But now I find I had suborn'd the witness,
And he 's indicted falsely."

Yes, he had suspected that some wicked conspiracy—some "unhatched practice"—in Cyprus was at the bottom of the alarm on the no-moon night, and, on that account, had joined Iago on the watch during the last seven days. Either that or some other matter of state,

it was clear, had ruffled his calm temper. And the good wife, whom her lord now and again endearingly addressed as his "handsome warrior," cursed herself as a most "unhandsome warrior," for the unfair attack she had made upon him in her mind during those few minutes.

Emilia had however her own misgivings in the matter. While her mistress was talking to Cassio, she had secretly beckoned to Iago, begging him for the return of the handkerchief, but he had beckoned in reply, ordering her strictly to keep her peace: and a minute later, he was off, pretending to attribute the general's disquietude to state-affairs. Now, when Desdemona felt sure it was nothing else which had upset her lord, what could the poor maid do but sincerely hope it was so? She did not however conceal from her mistress that the Moor's trouble seemed to her to be naught but jealousy:

"Pray heaven it be state matters, as you think,
And no conception nor jealous toy,
Concerning you.
Des. Alas the day! I never gave him cause.
Emil. But jealous souls will not be answer'd so;
They are not ever jealous for the cause,
But jealous for they are jealous: 't is a monster
Begot upon itself, born on itself.
Des. Heaven keep that monster from Othello's mind!"

Poor, simple Desdemona, too innocent to suspect that she was suspected! Conscious as she was of her virtue and confident that she had given him no cause, how could she suspect any jealousy in her lord? How could she help finding excuses for his ill-humour? It is truly pathetic to note the errings of this guileless creature. She not only readily believed that it was state-matters which had disturbed her lord's even temper and blamed herself for thinking unkindly of him, but

now proceeded to seek him, with a view to soothe his troubled mind and, if possible, to remove Cassio's disappointment.

> "I will go seek him.—Cassio, walk hereabout;
> If I do find him fit, I'll move your suit
> And seek to effect it to my uttermost.
> *Cas.* I humbly thank your ladyship."
> [*Exeunt Des. and Emil.*

But neither Desdemona nor Iago could see the Moor, for he had locked himself up in his chamber and evidently did not wish to be disturbed.

XII

For a full half-hour, Cassio waited and walked about in front of the castle, expecting the general and his lady to turn up, but, seeing no sign of their coming, he moved to the roadside and was strolling there, when he suddenly found himself face to face with his mistress, Bianca. He had absented himself from her for a whole week, under the advice of his friend, and did not now wish to be seen in her company, just in front of the castle; but the doting mistress would not leave him. She had granted him a week's leave with extreme reluctance, and was now proceeding to his lodging to ascertain if he was going to her place that night. She had special delicacies in view for supper if his coming was certain, and she was glad she had not missed him on the way.

> "*Bian.* 'Save you, friend Cassio!
> *Cas.* What make you from home?
> How is it with you, my most fair Bianca?
> Indeed, sweet love, I was coming to your house.
> *Bian.* And I was going to your lodging, Cassio.
> What, keep a week away? seven days and nights?
> Eight score eight hours? and lovers' absent hours,
> More tedious than the dial eight score times?
> Oh, weary reckoning!

Cas. Pardon me, Bianca,
I have this while with leaden thoughts been press'd,
But I shall in a more continuate time
Strike off this score of absence. Sweet Bianca,
[*Giving her the handkerchief.*
Take me this work out.
Bian. Oh, Cassio, whence came this?
This is some token from a newer friend;
To the felt absence now I feel a cause.
Is 't come to this. Well, well.
Cas. Go to, woman!
Throw your vile guesses in the devil's teeth,
From whence you have them. You are jealous now
That this is from some mistress, some remembrance:
No, in good troth, Bianca.
Bian. Why, whose is it?
Cas. I know not neither; I found it in my chamber.
I like the work well; ere it be demanded—
As like enough it will—I 'd have it copied:
Take it, and do 't; and leave me for this time.
Bian. Leave you! wherefore?
Cas. I do attend here on the general;
And think it no addition, nor my wish,
To have him see me woman'd.
Bian. Why, I pray you?
Cas. Not that I love you not.
Bian. But that you do not love me.
I pray you, bring me on the way a little,
And say if I shall see you soon at night.
Cas. 'Tis but a little way that I can bring you,
For I attend here; but I'll see you soon.
Bian. 'Tis very good; I must be circumstanc'd." [*Exeunt.*

How different would have been the course of events if Cassio had seen the handkerchief with Desdemona, or even heard of such a gift to her from the Moor! We might well fancy that the "little" way became a long way, and Bianca would not permit Cassio to turn back until they had almost approached her house; bothering him the while to explain why he had stayed away those seven days, to swear he had no other sweetheart, to tell her the real truth about the handkerchief—how, when, where, and from whom he had got it—and so on!

Why did Iago tell Cassio to give the handkerchief to Bianca? It is clear he had no further object in making the suggestion than to send him to her house that night, on some pretext: certain, he had not the remotest idea that it would form an important link in the terrible chain of events that were soon to occur. When the devil is in luck's path, accidents help him along in the most unexpected sort!

XIII

It was indeed a very narrow escape for Desdemona that Othello did not draw his sword upon her, when, in spite of his repeated and earnest demands, she dallied with him without producing the handkerchief, and, what was worse, urged Cassio's suit with the most childish persistence. At ten o' clock that morning, Othello had been in the happiest state of mind, and his love for his wife was perfect and undisturbed. By eleven, the devil had, by the most artful insinuations, dragged the character of Desdemona into discussion, and by a final reference to the words of the old father, prepared the seeds of suspicion in the husband's soul; and the noble Moor was not only shaken in his love, but descended from his dignity and desired his honest friend to watch and let him "know more," and to set on his wife "to observe!" Immediately afterwards, however, the divine presence of Desdemona prevented the seeds from sprouting, and Othello felt that, if *she* was false, "heaven mock'd itself," and was instantly restored to love and trust—only to be thrown back into doubt, at the dinner, and to find himself stretched on the rack of jealousy by twelve o' clock! He retired from the dinner and discovered to his utter vexation that, though he was not jealous by nature, he could not stop the growth

of jealousy in his soul when the seeds came from without, that the "green-ey'd monster" tormented him as badly as it would do any other—even worse, for he could not patiently submit to it and follow its lead. He had indeed fancied he could do "away at once with love or jealousy," according as his doubt was or was not proved, but he now found out his mistake. Two things had become plain to him: that without Desdemona's love he should be doomed to "chaos" and "perdition," and that his soul was for ever incurably poisoned with jealousy, for the wretched feeling returned even after it was once put out! He had been restored to love and faith, just before the dinner, but in less than an hour, he was in the flames of jealousy! Again, in the solitude of his chamber, his love returned, but the horns of his dilemma were staring him in the face all the same, and he felt irretrievably ruined. He sent for Iago and pounced upon him, demanding him, on pain of instant death, to furnish proof—ocular proof!—of Desdemona's guilt. It was the devil's opportunity for dealing his master-stroke. By a thunderbolt of feigned indignation, he vanquished the victim once for all and indelibly impressed his love and honesty upon him. From that moment, Iago might say anything against Desdemona, yet Othello could not question his truth and sincerity, though he might discard his conclusion. So great, indeed, was the effect of that *coup-de-grace,* that Iago became not merely Othello's lieutenant and right hand but absolutely one with the general whom he professed to love and serve. Iago's ears were Othello's, his eyes were the general's. The Moor no longer insisted on getting "ocular proof" or such proof as bore "no hinge nor loop to hang a doubt on," but would be satisfied with any "living reason" that his wife was disloyal. Who was to be the judge of the "living reason"? Of

course, Othello. The friend to reveal his reasons without fear, and the husband to judge! The simple Moor, with his poor powers of judgment, to constitute himself a judge! Alas, the irony of fate! the Moor's faith in his friend's love and honesty outweighed that in his wife's!—and such a wife! But the poor man had become a victim to jealousy, and how could he escape its cruel mockery? Iago had mentioned but a couple of "living reasons," and Othello's verdict was at once pronounced against Desdemona. He was not only convinced of her infidelity but felt that he had been from the very beginning the dupe of a vile prostitute, and bewailed that his bright name had been tarnished, and, swearing vengeance against the culprits, resolved upon their death and his own. He gave order to his honest friend (whom he identified with himself) for the murder of Cassio, and immediately it was accomplished he decided to put an end to his wife and to himself. The noble Moor, usually calm and unmoved, became a prey to passion, and, on the flimsiest evidence—if indeed it could be honoured by that name—condemned his loving wife and his faithful friend to death—*unheard!* The Christian, who believed in soul and sin, resolved upon murder and suicide and welcomed the everlasting punishments of hell to avoid the present torture of jealousy! This was about one o' clock, while the banquet was still continuing. An hour's repose restored the infuriated man to calm, and even his poor intellect perceived (his confidence in Iago's honesty remaining quite unshaken) that the evidence on which he had condemned both his wife and friend was by no means conclusive against them, and was not incompatible with their innocence. Perchance the sleep-talk of Cassio was but a loud dream, and the handkerchief he had was perhaps some other, similar to his own. It was best

to go to Desdemona and ascertain if she had not her handkerchief with her. But he would not approach her in an open, straightforward manner and demand the kerchief, revealing to her what had been told him about it—how could he, victim as he was to doubt and suspicion? The jealousy which had clutched his soul stooped him to tricks and devices! He pretended to read a lustful character in her hand, he frightened her by a tale of the handkerchief's virtues and the consequences which should follow a loss or *gift* of it—all to watch the effect on her, to study the change in her features! The doubt could not however be solved in this indirect manner. Desdemona gave him at first a weak, then a positive, assurance that the handkerchief was *not* lost, yet she would not produce it. She said she *could,* but would not, then. Why not, then, if she really had it with her? Had she given it away to Cassio and did she intend to get it back from him? Othello's suspicion was confirmed; his passion grew when, in spite of his repeated calls for the handkerchief, Desdemona trifled with him by urging the suit of Cassio—Cassio who was on trial for treachery; his fury became uncontrollable, and he almost drew his sword to lop off the head of his offending wife! but to avoid a precipitate deed which would leave the false friend unpunished, he at once rushed away from the place and locked himself up in his chamber. All this was the work of but a few minutes after the clock struck two, and until three o'clock, he remained in his room, trying to reclaim himself, to collect his thoughts, to weigh the circumstances carefully, to judge dispassionately, and to come to a correct conclusion.

Othello felt deeply ashamed that he had fallen a victim to jealousy, that his passion had transformed him into a beast and drove him to the verge of brutal

deeds. Where was the difference between Othello and the man in the street, if he failed to control himself at a critical turn? It was monstrous he should entertain murderous ideas. Who was he to punish sinners? Vengeance was God's, and, Christian as he was, he should not act the barbarian, even if the worst was proved against his wife. But oh, how difficult it was for him to judge upon the evidence in his hands, and how good it would be if he could secure a bit of "ocular proof"! But it was folly to expect "ocular proof" in such cases: indeed, it would be impossible to secure, "were they as prime as goats, as hot as monkeys." His friend had said it, and he was a wise man. *Goats and monkeys!* Indeed so! He could never forget the words. "Ocular proof" was out of the question. He must weigh the evidence that was available and come to a conclusion. If that conclusion established the guilt of Desdemona, he should cast her off like a good Christian and conduct himself like a human being: if it did not establish her guilt, he should pluck out all doubt from his mind, admit no jealousy and continue to love his "excellent wretch" as before. "Away at once with love or jealousy!"—he had said it, and he must act it; he *must*. With this penitent preamble, Othello constituted himself sole judge and began to exercise judicial functions—Othello, unversed in the world's complicacies and cunning! He concentrated all the powers of his mind, sifted the circumstances once and again, and, be it said to his credit, did his task in an admirably judicial style. He analysed the evidence about the handkerchief and discarded it after considerable mental struggle. There was proof to his mind that the handkerchief *was* in Cassio's hand: Iago had seen it and Iago was an honest man (this was now an axiom with him). And it was clear to him Desdemona did

not produce it, because she could not. This did not however establish that she had given it to Cassio. Perhaps she had *lost* it and it somehow passed into his hands; perhaps she hoped to find it on search and believed it was not lost. Sure, he had frightened her about it, and what was there in her persistent pleading of Cassio's suit, if really she was guiltless? Far from weighing against her, it was a circumstance which declared her innocence. Indeed, her speech, her look, her manner, everything about her proclaimed her heavenly purity. It was stupid not to have asked her plainly about the handkerchief. He would go to her directly, tell her what had come to his knowledge about it, and set his doubt at rest. But what about the other bit of evidence which his honest friend had revealed to him—the sleep-talk of Cassio? It seemed to be no more than a dream and, surely, was no evidence against anybody: and Iago had said so at the time. Anyhow, he would see the good friend, and if he agreed in his opinion, there was an end of the matter and he would banish all doubt from his mind. Thus resolved, Othello stepped out of his room and proceeded to the verandah, and sent for Iago to see him immediately.

XIV

It was three o'clock in the afternoon when Othello and his honest friend met in the verandah before the castle, for the third and last time on that evil day. Iago was not the man to rest contented with the victory he had won and the order he had received for the murder of Cassio. He knew the Moor might change any moment. He might review the evidence, once and again, and conclude that his wife's guilt was not established and require better and indubitable proof. Iago had in-

deed told him he had seen Desdemona's handkerchief with Cassio, and, as a matter of fact, it was now with Cassio: but this circumstance could not be turned to account at once, and Othello could not be trusted to continue steady in his suspicion even for a day. He would not remain in suspense, but must, on the evidence brought to his knowledge, forthwith dispose of his doubt, one way or the other, and hold his wife either guilty or innocent. Barely two hours since, he had fully accepted her guilt, flew into a fit of fury, swore vengeance, and resolved upon her death and his own, and given him order for the murder of the paramour. An hour back, it was clear, he was still in a state of fury and excitement, and he had gone to see his lady and left her in "strange unquietness" and anger. He had evidently demanded the handkerchief from her and failed to get it. Was it possible that, in the solitude of his chamber, the vacillating victim now recovered the balance of his mind and returned to love and faith? Why did he send for Iago? Was he going to pounce upon him again and threaten to take his life if he did not produce some "ocular proof"? The honest friend was not unprepared for such a situation, much as he prayed for the rapid approach of the midnight hour. He knew what tremendous effect his indignant outburst had produced on the general, and what implicit faith he reposed in his love and honesty; knew, too, he must, if necessity arose, concoct nothing less than the evidence of his eyes and ears, yet must do so with very great caution and circumspection. He was not therefore altogether taken by surprise when his trusting friend told him that, after all, Cassio's sleep-talk appeared to him no more than a dream, and asked him for his honest opinion.

"Well, that's not a bad view at all," replied Iago, "and even if the words and kisses, which Cassio re-

vealed in his sleep, had been a matter of fact, I should think it no serious fault, if there was nothing further. Will you think so?" And the good friend seemed quite anxious to restore the general's peace of mind.

"Think so, Iago?" asked the general, wonderingly. "Do you ask me if I think so?"

"What!" ejaculated the friend, "to kiss in private? Would you think it a fault even to *kiss* in private?"

Kissing in private was of course no crime where it was sanctioned by the etiquette of society: but how could it be considered allowable where there was no such authority? Iago was evidently preaching a compromising code of morals which the noble Moor could by no means accept, and he asked in a tone of utmost surprise: "Is n't it a fault—an unauthorised kiss?"

Iago continued his former question as if to hint that he would not consider it objectionable even "to be naked with her friend in bed, an hour or more, not meaning any harm." This was a most ridiculous view and the general felt no hesitation in saying so:

> "Naked in bed, Iago, and not mean harm?
> It is hypocrisy against the devil;
> They that mean virtuously and yet do so,
> The devil their virtue tempts, and they tempt heaven."

If Othello had perceived the oblique insinuations contained in Iago's assertions, he would at once have asked his friend, "Tell me, Iago, did they ever kiss each other in private? Was she ever naked with her friend in bed, for an hour or any length of time?"—and Iago would, by guarded and indirect affirmatives, have driven him to believe in Desdemona's infidelity. But Othello went on to question the abstract proposition and Iago put an end to the discussion in an abrupt yet artful manner and drove him to talk about the handkerchief. How did the general get over the fact that was

brought to his knowledge that the handkerchief he had presented to his wife was seen in Cassio's hand?

> "*Iago*. If they do nothing, 't is a venial slip;
> But if I give my wife a handkerchief,—
> *Oth*. What then?
> *Iago*. Why, then, 'tis hers, my lord; and, being hers,
> She may, I think, *bestow 't* on any man.
> *Oth*. She is protectress of her honour too;
> May she give that?
> *Iago*. Her honour is an essence that 's not seen;
> They have it very oft that have it not:
> But for the handkerchief,—
> *Oth*. By heaven, I would most gladly have forgot it.
> Thou said'st—oh, it comes o'er my memory,
> As doth the raven o'er the infected house,
> Boding to all—*he had my handkerchief*.
> *Iago*. Ay, what of that?
> *Oth*. That's not so good now."

Of course, Iago had told Othello nothing more than that he had seen the handkerchief in Cassio's hand. The inference that Desdemona had given it to him, he wished Othello to draw for himself. Othello, indeed, did seem to make that inference at the moment, and swore vengeance against both the culprits: but now, he seemed to have abandoned it. Iago even suggested the idea of Desdemona's having "bestowed" the handkerchief on Cassio, but Othello, who dreaded the confusion his mind had just passed through on its account, would postulate no more than that *Cassio had his handkerchief*: "he had my handkerchief." "Ay, what of that?" remarked the friend, as if he attached no importance to that fact, but really to learn if Othello would draw the inference that *Desdemona had given the token to Cassio*. Unequal as he was to quick thinking, Othello paused for a minute and accepted his friend's view: "That's not so good now"—it is no proof of her guilt. Iago at once perceived that the ground was slipping from under his feet and dealt a bold master-stroke to save the situation.

The victim could only be brought down by revealing to him some proof which had come to Iago's eyes or ears (they were as good as Othello's own, for Iago's honesty was unquestionable). Iago should however proceed with care and caution, guarding himself with an '*if.*'

> "What,
> If I had said I had seen him do you wrong?
> Or heard him say,—as knaves be such abroad,
> Who having, by their importunate suit,
> Or voluntary dotage of some mistress,
> Convincèd or supplied them, cannot choose
> But they must blab—
> *Oth.* Hath he said anything?"

"Seen him do you wrong" was vague, and safe enough even without the 'if,' but it was safer to pin Othello's attention to what Iago "had *heard* him say" (to whom?) and the long parenthesis, which referred to the habit, usual with knaves, of boasting about their bad deeds, produced the desired effect. Othello grew impatient to hear what Cassio had said, and interrupted the parenthesis of his friend: "Hath he said anything?" Iago was extremely glad that Othello did not ask him "Have you seen anything?" but only "Hath he said anything?" He replied to him at once, of course with care and caution, and a few steps supplied the most indubitable probation to Othello's simple mind, and hurled the poor man into a swoon!

> "*Oth.* Hath he said anything?
> *Iago.* He hath, my lord; but be you well assur'd,
> No more than he'll unswear.
> *Oth.* What hath he said?
> *Iago.* Why, that he did—I know not what he did.
> *Oth.* What? What?
> *Iago.* Lie—
> *Oth.* With her?
> *Iago.* With her, on her, what you will.
> *Oth.* Lie with her? lie on her? We say lie on her, when they

belie her. Lie with her: that 's fulsome. Handkerchief: confessions: handkerchief. To confess, and be hang'd for his labour. First, to be hang'd, and then to confess: I tremble at it. Nature would not invest herself in such shadowing passion without some instruction. It is not words that shakes me thus,—pish!—noses, ears, and lips: is 't possible? Confess! handkerchief!—O devil!" [*Falls in a trance.*

Poor Othello's mental powers had been strained to their utmost capacity during the last three or four hours. He had repeatedly fallen into wrong conclusions based on the flimsiest evidence, lost himself in wrath and fury, swore vengeance, and welcomed hell itself! but each time, repose and reflection, and calm and careful scrutiny enabled him to shake off his passion, to wake up from his error, and to save himself from its fatal consequences. The sudden and rapid fluctuation of the feelings, the alternate excitement and self-control, the unusual demand on the mind—on its powers of analysis and argument—all this was too much for the simple Moor. Each time he had fallen a victim to the hints of his honest friend, he had to compel himself to think and judge, and returned after considerable struggle, to the love which had become the mainstay of his life. But how long could he make the effort, how long could he continue the struggle? The proof, which the good friend at length reluctantly revealed, consisted of nothing less than the criminal's own confession and fell on the poor victim like a very thunderbolt. He was instantly stunned. He strove to think, to analyse the confession, to see if the conclusion was correct. The confession was plain and direct, and left no room for doubt. The horrible truth was brought home to him, and, under the miserable conviction of the disgrace which had befallen him, his mind gave up all further strain and sought relaxation. His nerves submitted to the intense emotion which supervened, consciousness faded away rapidly, and he fell into a trance!

Cassio had the handkerchief with him and he had confessed his crime. Confessions: handkerchief—could there be any further room for doubt? Cassio had confessed and he should soon be hang'd for his labour! With Desdemona, the course must needs be different, for she would not confess. Othello had tried to get a confession from her, about the handkerchief, but failed. The only way to get her to confess was to hang her, to torture her, in the first instance. "First, to be hang'd, and then to confess!" This cruel idea of extorting the gentle lady's confession summoned her before his mind. A veritable halter on her neck!—ha! the coming event foreshadowed! He "trembled at it." It sent a shudder through his body, his intellect grew dim and misty; he felt that the change which was creeping over him could not be the result of mere emotion and excitement, "without some instruction," some communication from unseen intelligence which sent the horrible truth home to his soul. Sure, the severe "shaking"—the ecstasy and shivering which overpowered him—couldn't be due to the fury of his "words." Pish! his nostrils vibrated violently, his ears rang with sounds, his lips quivered. His speech was failing fast, his consciousness was fading away, and he felt as if he was going to faint—"was it possible?" And he hastily demanded Desdemona to "confess" about the handkerchief, but she was mute. Oh, she was false as hell! She was indeed a "fair devil," and he could only curse her and call her a "devil" before he sank down.*

The swoon lasted for nearly half an hour, and Iago gloated on the success of his diablerie:

> "Work on,
> My medicine, work! Thus credulous fools are caught:
> And many worthy and chaste dames even thus,
> All guiltless, meet reproach."

* See notes on IV. i. 37-8 and 41.

Thanks to the prince of devils for this most valuable lesson he has taught to humanity! for, truly, it was neither Othello's jealousy, nor his intellectual mediocrity, that brought him down and led to the catastrophe which followed, but his simple credulity, his "free and open nature" which made him "think men honest that but seemed to be so," his absolute faith in Iago's honesty and sincerity. But how could he, or any man, escape the effect of the devil's thunderbolt—the outburst of his "honest" indignation—so powerful, so natural, so just, so full of unconscious insult, of genuine disgust and self-condemnation!

It is impossible to say what the course of events would have been if Othello had been left to himself after he recovered from the swoon. But fate was determined upon his destruction and presently enabled its agent to deal his worst blow on the victim. Cassio returned to the castle after leaving Bianca at her house, and, seeing Iago standing in the verandah, walked up to him and was surprised to find the general lying on the floor in an unconscious condition. He was however sent out immediately by the good friend who told him of the epileptic fit.

> "*Cas.* What's the matter?
> *Iago.* My lord is fall'n into an epilepsy:
> This is his second fit; he had one yesterday.
> *Cas.* Rub him about the temples.
> *Iago.* No, forbear;
> The lethargy must have his quiet course:
> If not, he foams at mouth, and by and by
> Breaks out to savage madness. Look, he stirs:
> Do you withdraw yourself a little while,
> He will recover straight; when he is gone,
> I would on great occasion speak with you." [*Exit Cassio.*

Yes, it was extremely dangerous to allow Cassio to stay there even for a minute, for, if Othello should see him on recovering consciousness, he was sure to "break out

Oth. Oh, thou art wise; 't is certain."

Iago's spirited words produced the desired effect on Othello, though he was only half-attentive to them, engaged as he was in his own rumination—Did he confess it? did the confession establish her guilt? He felt the unwisdom of his vacillation and argument (even after his wife's guilt was brought to his knowledge by a most honest friend) and exclaimed—"Oh, thou art wise; it is certain." The wisdom of Iago's attitude and the certainty of Desdemona's guilt were alike manifest to his mind: but yet his fury was asleep! And the villain instantly proceeded to prepare the way for the execution of his latest idea.

"*Iago.* Stand you awhile apart;
Confine yourself but in a patient list.
Whilst you were here o'erwhelmed with your *grief—*
A passion most unsuiting such a man—
Cassio came hither: I shifted him away,
And laid good 'scuse upon your ecstasy,
Bade him anon return and here speak with me;
The which he promis'd. Do but encave yourself,
And mark the fleers, the gibes, and notable scorns,
That dwell in every region of his face;
For I will make him tell the tale anew,
Where, how, how oft, how long ago, and when
He hath, and is again to cope with your wife:
I say, *but mark his gesture.* Marry, patience;
Or I shall say you are all in all in spleen,
And nothing of a man.
Oth. Dost thou hear, Iago?
I will be found most cunning in my patience;
But—dost thou hear?—*most bloody.*
Iago. That's not amiss;
But keep time in all. Will you withdraw?" [*Othello retires.*

Thus, the noble Moor hid himself behind a screen to play the eavesdropper on Cassio! Oh, "the ignominious pass to which jealousy brings its victims"! Had not Othello, at eleven o'clock that morning, told his honest friend to watch and let him know more, and to set on his wife to observe? Had he not, barely two

hours back, "dissembled" and pretended to read his wife's character in her hand? Had he not descended to tricks and devices—to low "fishing"—to discover the truth about the handkerchief? What wonder if, under the influence of the same monster which kept him giddy, he now consented to play the eavesdropper to satisfy his mind by *direct* and conclusive evidence? The very idea that such evidence was available swept away all doubt from his mind, and his fury was revived! He gave Iago the positive assurance that he would be "most cunning in his patience," but—"*most bloody!*" The poor man who degraded himself to this patient eavesdropping was, however, to *hear* no words (Iago was no fool to permit the conversation to take place within the dupe's earshot) but only to *see*—to "mark the fleers, the gibes, and notable scorns that dwell in every region" of Cassio's face. And this would be as good as *hearing,* because the subject of the conversation was to be Desdemona—the honest friend said so and his word was gospel truth!

> "I will make him tell the tale anew,
> Where, how, how oft, how long ago, and when
> He hath, and is again to cope with your wife:
> I say, *but mark his gesture.*"

Othello might well stretch out his hand to his friend and say—"I am bound to thee for ever!"

Having deposited Othello in his hiding place and conjured him to be "in a patient list"—within the bounds of patience—Iago felt himself master of the situation, stepped down from the verandah and paced to and from the gateway, telling himself what he was to do:

> "Now will I question Cassio of Bianca,
> A housewife that by selling her desires
> Buys herself bread and clothes. It is a creature
> That dotes on Cassio, (as 't is the strumpet's plague
> To beguile many and be beguil'd by one).

He, when he hears of her, cannot refrain
From the excess of laughter.—Here he comes."

How well the villain understood Cassio's light and easy-going character, and how sure he was of throwing him, in spite of the depression in his spirits, into uncontrollable fits of laughter, by talking to him of his "sweet Bianca!" As soon as Iago's eyes fell on Cassio, he signalled to him to step in, and quickly concluded his monologue:

"As he shall smile, Othello shall go mad;
And his unbookish jealousy must construe
Poor Cassio's smiles, gestures, and light behaviour,
Quite in the wrong."

It is certain that the friends were stationed pretty far from the verandah, so that Othello might hear no words distinctly (except perhaps the name *Desdemona* which Iago would have uttered in a loud voice) yet might plainly observe the "smiles, gestures, and light behaviour" of Cassio. And Othello's conjectural asides make it quite clear that the poor man played the rôle of a deaf-and-dumb observer and construed the laughter and the gestures on the fundamental assumption and belief that his honest friend was getting Cassio to relate the tale of Desdemona's love for him.

"*Iago.* How do you now, lieutenant.
Cas. The worser that you give me the addition
Whose want even kills me.
Iago. Ply *Desdemona* well, and you are sure on 't.
Now, if this suit lay in Bianca's power,
How quickly should you speed!
Cas. Alas, poor caitiff!
Oth. Look, how he laughs already!
Iago. I never knew woman love man so.
Cas. Alas, poor rogue! I think, indeed, she loves me.
Oth. Now he denies it faintly, and laughs it out.
Iago. Do you hear, Cassio?
Oth. *Now he importunes him*
To tell it o'er: go to; well said, well said.

Iago. She gives it out that you shall marry her;
Do you intend it?
Cas. Ha, ha, ha!
Oth. Do you triumph, Roman! do you triumph!
Cas. I marry—what?—a customer! Prithee, bear
Some charity to my wit; do not think it
So unwholesome. Ha, ha, ha!
Oth. So, so, so, so; they laugh that wins.
Iago. Why, the cry goes that you shall marry her.
Cas. Prithee, say true.
Iago. I am a very villain else.
Oth. Have you scor'd me? Well.
Cas. This is the monkey's own giving out;
She is persuaded I will marry her,
Out of her own love and flattery, not out of my promise."

Othello's impatient asides threatened to become audible and Iago beckoned to warn him to be patient. Alas, the blunders into which the deaf spectator readily tripped and the feelings they aroused!

"*Oth. Iago beckons me; now he begins the story.*

Cas. She was here even now; she haunts me in every place. I was the other day talking on the sea-bank with certain Venetians; and thither comes the bauble, and falls me thus about my neck—

Oth. Crying 'O dear Cassio!' as it were; his gesture imports it.

Cas. So hangs, and lolls, and weeps upon me;
So shakes and pulls me: ha, ha, ha!

Oth. Now he tells how she plucked him to my chamber.—Oh, I see that nose of yours, but not that dog I shall throw it to.

Cas. Well, I must leave her company.

Iago. Before me, look, where she comes.

Enter BIANCA.

Cas. 'T is such another fitchew! marry, a perfumed one.—
What do you mean by this haunting of me?

Bian. Let the devil and his dam haunt you! What did you mean by that same handkerchief you gave me even now? I was a fine fool to take it. I must take out the work?—A likely piece of work, that you should find it in your chamber, and know not who left it there! This is some minx's token, and I must take out the work? There, give it your hobby-horse; wheresoever you had it, I'll take out no work on 't.

Cas. How now, my sweet Bianca! how now! how now!

Oth. By heaven, that should be my handkerchief!

Bian. If you 'll come to supper to-night, you may; if you will not, come when you are next prepared for." [*Exit.*

Bianca had scarcely been half an hour in her house when all the explanations and oaths of her lover seemed to her to be false. The very appearance of the handkerchief assured her that it could not have been picked by chance, that "some minx" must have given it to Cassio, as a token of her love: there was no doubt about it to her mind. The excuse, too, which he gave for his seven days' absence seemed likewise false, and she had been a fool to believe it. Indeed, she was quite a simpleton. She must "take out the work!"—why? Did Cassio wish to return the original to the minx, retaining the duplicate as a memento? She was a fine fool to take it! And she felt so distressed that her lover, whom she doted on so, should belittle her and cheat her, she made up her mind to run back to him instantly and throw the handkerchief at him and have nothing more to do with him unless—he came down on his knees and begged her to forgive him and promised to conduct himself better in the future! And the jealous mistress rushed to the very gate of the castle and peeped in, and finding Cassio and Iago talking together, went forth to them and flung the handkerchief at her lover, with a volley of vituperation. Cassio indeed felt disgusted with the unwelcome "haunting" by his mistress and rebuked her sharply, but when she rebuked in return, he remembered that it was not the place for bandying words and entreated her silence kindly and lovingly. The angry mistress was at once calmed and she went away with a warning that the insulted lover was expected for supper all the same!

Iago was altogether taken by surprise by the unexpected visit of Bianca, and he almost trembled in his shoes when she took out the handkerchief from her pocket and flung it at Cassio (he did not know it had already passed into her hands). How dangerous it would

be, he thought, if Othello, unable to control his feelings at the sight of his handkerchief in the hands of a courtesan, rushed out to Cassio and threatened to take his life? Bianca was gone, but Cassio was there still, with the handkerchief in his pocket, and until he was sent out, Iago was in imminent danger. So, he urged the friend to run after his angry mistress. He did not however, in spite of his perturbation, omit to assure himself that Cassio was going to Bianca's that night for supper. Fortunately, Cassio did intend to sup there: if he did not, Iago would have advised him and persuaded him to do so—for on it depended his future plan.

"*Iago.* After her, after her.
Cas. I must; she 'll rail in the streets else.
Iago. Will you sup there?
Cas. Yes, I intend so.
Iago. Well, I may chance to see you; for I would very fain speak with you.
Cas. Prithee, come; will you?
Iago. Go to; say no more." [*Exit Cassio.*

Cassio was gone, and Iago felt that his luck had helped him in a way which, with all his fertile brain, he could never have contrived or even dreamt of contriving! That Othello should actually see his own precious handkerchief in the hands of Cassio and his mistress!—how well and opportunely this bit of "ocular" evidence strengthened the dumb-show he had just palmed off on the trusting dupe! Iago congratulated himself on the complete success of his plan and stepped up into the verandah and proceeded to the noble prisoner, who had fully kept his word and remained "in a patient list." And he was delighted to hear the murderous resolve which Othello announced as he came out to meet him:

"*Oth.* How shall I murder him, Iago?
Iago. Did you perceive how he laughed at his vice?
Oth. Oh, Iago!

Iago. And did you see the handkerchief?

Oth. Was that mine?

Iago. Yours, by this hand; and to see how he prizes the foolish woman your wife! she gave it him, and he hath given it his whore.

Oth. I would have him nine years a-killing.—A fine woman! a fair woman! a sweet woman!"

Now that Cassio was gone away, Iago could well afford to exasperate the Moor against him by recalling his triumphant laughter and light behaviour, and the shame of shames that the precious handkerchief he had given to Desdemona should, owing to her wantonness, have passed into the hands of a "whore." It was lucky, he thought, Othello could not, from his distant position, quite identify the handkerchief as his own—it was partially folded and was in view only for half a minute—though he exclaimed, "By heaven, that should be my handkerchief!" And now he assured the Moor that it *was* his handkerchief, and his oath was scarcely necessary. The foolish woman (oh, the villain's dashing liberty!) gave it to her lover and he gave it "his whore!" Othello's anger bit him bitterly—he would have the treacherous friend "nine years a-killing." His fury however lacked its former force. He was shocked to observe that Cassio actually boasted of Desdemona's infatuation for him, and he felt hopelessly humiliated by the horrible truth, now incontrovertibly and conclusively demonstrated to him, of her downright degradation and fall. And though the unbearable anguish of the shame, she had brought on his head, drove him to hate her, yet he could not resist the melancholy contemplation of her matchless beauty, her unique accomplishments and her gentle and sweet disposition, and felt almost overpowered by "the pity of it"—the pity of such a paragon proving foul and having to be condemned to death. Iago, however, managed to turn this weakness into strength by throwing in short, effective appeals

and observations, and finally by a sharp mockery whetted Othello's revenge and made him dispel the returning fondness for his fallen wife.

"*Oth.* I would have him nine years a-killing.—A fine woman! a fair woman! a sweet woman!

Iago. Nay, you must forget that.

Oth. Ay, let her rot, and perish, and be damned to-night; for she shall not live. No, my heart is turned to stone; I strike it, and it hurts my hand.—Oh, the world hath not a sweeter creature; she might lie by an emperor's side and command him tasks.

Iago. Nay, that's not your way.

Oth. Hang her! I do but say what she is; so delicate with her needle! an admirable musician! Oh! she will sing the savageness out of a bear! of so high and plenteous wit and invention!

Iago. She is the worse for all this.

Oth. Oh, a thousand thousand times;—and then, of so gentle a condition!

Iago. Ay, too gentle.

Oth. Nay, that's certain;—but yet the pity of it, Iago! O Iago, the pity of it, Iago!

Iago. If you are so fond over her iniquity, give her patent to offend; for, if it touch not you, it comes near nobody.

Oth. I will chop her into messes! cuckold me!

Iago. Oh, 't is foul in her.

Oth. With mine officer!

Iago. That's fouler.

Oth. Get me some poison, Iago, this night:—I'll not expostulate with her, lest her body and beauty unprovide my mind again:—this night, Iago.

Iago. Do it not with poison; strangle her in her bed, even the bed she hath contaminated.

Oth. Good, good! the justice of it pleases; very good!

Iago. And for Cassio, let me be his undertaker; you shall hear more by midnight.

Oth. Excellent good!"

Othello might very well hesitate to expostulate with Desdemona and fear that her body and beauty might deprive him of resolution, for, indeed, in those four or five hours, he had more than once experienced the soothing influence of her heavenly form on his soul: and he might, too, feel himself unequal to the task of lifting his hand to kill her, and beg his friend to procure him some poison. But Iago was no fool to run any risks for his

general's sake, and readily suggested that he should "strangle her in her bed, even the bed she hath contaminated;" and the justice of it pleased Othello! The Moor was too fully affected by the immeasureable loss which had befallen him and the "chaos" which was awaiting him to think of his vengeance on Cassio. Iago was however ready to remind him of it and renewed his authority to despatch the treacherous friend and undertook to do it even by midnight. "Excellent good!" exclaimed Othello automatically, when the clock struck four and the sound of a trumpet announced the arrival of some one—and lo! it was Lodovico, from Venice, and Desdemona was accompanying him.

XV

The reader will recollect that just two weeks back, on the arrival of Othello's message from Cyprus reporting the utter perdition of the Turkish troops, the Senate despatched a commission under Gratiano and Lodovico, politely recalling Othello for the trial *de novo,* in deference to public opinion, of the charge which had been preferred against him in respec tof his marriage; and appointing Cassio in his place and further directing the general, notwithstanding the previous decision of the Senate or any inviolable rights he might assert or the damsel's own wish and inclination to the contrary, forthwith to commit and entrust Desdemona to the care and guardianship of her uncle, Gratiano, and warning him *not to fail to do this* on any pretext whatsoever. That ship had just arrived, and Gratiano and Lodovico repaired straight from the harbour to Montano's, and thence Lodovico proceeded alone to the castle, carrying the despatches to Othello. Gratiano fully shared his brother's patrician pride and would not recognise

the marriage of the Moor with his niece: and besides, Desdemona was, for the present, to be kept in ignorance of her father's death, and neither Gratiano nor Lodovico might breathe a syllable about it to any one.

But how about the daughter of misfortune—the gentle Desdemona—from whom fate, with all its cruelty, kindly concealed the sad news of her father's death? Was she destined to follow him into eternity exactly five weeks after the rude disruption of the parental bond on that no-moon night? What evil foreboding it was she knew not, but it is certain that soon after her lord left her at two o' clock, in a fit of frantic fury over the missing handkerchief, and locked himself up in his chamber, her thoughts travelled back almost instinctively to the strange events of that sleepless night and she never felt more lonely in life than she did at that moment. Had she left her father and home and everything and dedicated herself to the service of her lord but to lose his love so soon, and through no crime of hers! The anxious enquiry which the kind father made of her at supper-time on the night of her secret wedding—"What is the matter with thee, child? aren't you feeling well?"—his distressed appearance in the council-chamber when she avowed her choice of the Moor, his harsh and angry words at parting—all rushed upon her memory as if they had taken place the previous night.

> "Look to her, Moor, if thou hast eyes to see;
> She has deceiv'd her father, and may thee."

True, these unhappy words of her enraged father did, at the time of their utterance, diminish her hope of a speedy reconciliation with him, but that hope was strengthened the very next morning by the return of the good man's kindness and affection. Did those words contain the malediction of a heart-broken parent, and

was she going to fall a victim to it? This thought now flashed upon her mind—she did not know why—and yet she could not think that her kind father had cursed her. That those harsh words should now be revived in her memory, for the first time after five weeks! that she should now, for the first time, too, realise her folly in having concealed her trouble from her kind father, even after his anxious enquiry! "What is the matter with thee, child? aren't you feeling well?"—"Nothing, father, I am all right." But she was not all right. Oh, had she indeed *deceived* her good father! And tears gathered in her lovely eyes as she looked at his picture hanging in the hall. A tremour crept through her body as she fancied that tears were dropping from his eyes on the grey beard. A dreadful presentiment took possession of her soul, and she wept! But, presently, she recovered and blamed herself for her silly thoughts and superstition. Surely, she had not *deceived* her good father and could never, *never* deceive her dear lord! Then, why did she allow her father's harsh and hasty words to upset her? It was stupid to think that he had cursed her or that her lord was going to hate her? Why, why should he? why *would* he? Iago had assured her that some state-matters had unsettled his calm and tranquil temper, and he was right. She had thoughtlessly pressed her suit on her lord at a most unhappy moment, and annoyed him when his mind was already vexed; and she should not now disturb him but leave him to himself for a little while. So thinking, the simple lady satisfied herself, but the tale she had been told about the handkerchief would not cease to trouble her. Was it a mere joke? She could not think so, for her lord was quite serious in his speech. Then, was she going to lose his love if the token was indeed lost? She shuddered at the very

thought, and ran into her chamber and searched, again and again, in chest and drawer and everywhere, but alas! the handkerchief was not to be found—it *was* lost! Was her lord going to "loathe" her and quit her? Again, the strange tale frightened her; again, she believed and yet could not believe it; again, she recalled Iago's explanation; again, she remembered the angry earnestness of her lord; again, her father's painful words sounded in her ears as a curse! The poor child could not bear the strain of this fear, and doubt, and thought, and presentiment, and she sank on the sofa close by and fell asleep. She dreamt that she had returned to Venice and was in the affectionate arms of her beloved father, and felt his head bending on hers and blessing it by the touch! What sweet happiness! what celestial joy! But where was her chosen lord? She lifted her head and opened her eyes, and oh, the vision vanished away! She walked into the balcony, and what was her surprise when her eyes fell on the handsome figure of her cousin Lodovico, making towards the castle from the western gate! Was it a dream, too? or was the dream, just ended, going to be realised? Certain, it was no dream. It was Lodovico from Venice, and with a cry of joy she ran downstairs and met her cousin at the steps and welcomed him.

"What's the news, good cousin Lodovico?" asked Desdemona.

"I have brought a commission from the Duke and must see the general at once," replied Lodovico.

"My lord is in the verandah on the other side, conspiring with Iago," informed the Clown who happened to be near.

And the cousins proceeded thither. Desdemona's countenance brightened up as she guessed they should directly be returning to Venice: her lord had told her

some three weeks back that all the necessary arrangements in the island had been completed, and his presence was no longer required, that he had written so to the Senate and expected they would order his return.

> "*Lod.* 'Save you, worthy general!
> *Oth.* With all my heart, sir
> *Lod.* The duke and the senators of Venice greet you.
> [*Gives him a letter.*
> *Oth.* I kiss the instrument of their pleasures."
> [*Opens the letter and reads.*

The sudden advent of Lodovico and the consequent interruption of the conference between Othello and Iago helped the villain most materially. He had already discovered that he had got into a most uncertain business and, unless he concluded it promptly and irrevocably, he might find himself in a most ruinous plight. With all his acuteness and insight into human character, he had committed a gross blunder in his calculations about Othello. He had promised himself the pleasure, which should last some little while, of seeing the general a victim to jealousy, and expected, too, to find delight for his soul in befriending the helpless man in his troubles: but the Moor would not submit to the green-eyed monster and was impatient to settle, one way or the other, the doubt which troubled his mind, and, within the last five hours, had changed and rechanged his conclusion, and oscillated between faith and unfaith, love and revenge, calm and fury, dispassion and destruction, and even turned against his honest friend! Iago had already perceived this strange and dangerous development of the mischief he had set on foot, and found that, though he had not bargained for any murders, his safety demanded the death, at least of Cassio, and he was glad that Othello had sworn vengeance against the treacherous man and given order for his murder to be accomplished "*within* three days," and

resolved, too, to put an end to Desdemona and to himself. The honest lieutenant had given the general the ready assurance, " My friend is dead," and was indeed planning to discharge his duty that very night, for delay was dangerous; but,to his great disappointment, within a couple of hours, Othello receded from his resolve and reopened the discussion of his doubt. And it required a clean morsel of concocted confession to conquer him, and a whole scene of convincing dumb-show, which chance opportunely threw in the way, to drive him to his old position, to rouse his vengeance and revive his murderous determination. Withal, his rage was now not half as vehement as before, and he seemed rather overwhelmed with the sense of the infinite loss which had befallen him than impelled by any thirst for revenge. Iago had indeed successfully goaded the Moor to decide upon strangling his wife that very night, and silently renewed the sanction for the murder of Cassio, but it was possible, nay probable, that he might review and reconsider his decision unless he was otherwise engaged until midnight, when Cassio's death, it was to be hoped, would be an accomplished fact. The opportune arrival of Lodovico, with letters from the Senate, was therefore nothing short of a godsend to the devil, for the conference was abruptly concluded at the murderous determination, and Othello was obliged to turn his attention to the messenger from Venice. Iago hoped that the general would send him no more calls that day and would be engaged with the guest and the news he had brought.

To Othello, on the other hand, the abrupt and unexpected entrance of the envoy was a most unseasonable intrusion. He had, since noon, passed through a series of shocks and convulsions, and the very extraordinary demand made on his powers of thinking and judgment, as well as the cruel torture he had to endure, had ex-

hausted him, and he had just recovered from a trance. The dumb-show he had witnessed had struck him with endless grief and pity, and chaos had begun to take possession of his soul: yet, under the instigation of the honest friend, he revived, in a measure, the feeling of hatred and vengeance which had so unsettled him at one o'clock; and he had scarcely given utterance to his resolution to strangle his wife that night when he saw her coming to him, conducting Lodovico into his presence. It seemed to him as if heaven had sent its own messenger to stay his hand against the perpetration of a brutal deed and save its darling child!

Othello's was essentially a poetic and imaginative temperament. He had coloured the narrative of his adventures with poetry and romance and fascinated his fair listener. And he could as readily bid a poetic farewell to peace and tranquillity and his very occupation, or strike his heart and feel it hard as stone, as recall a picture of the "compulsive course" of the Pontic sea sweeping on, never to flow back, to the Propontic and the Hellespont, or of the Arabian trees dropping their "med'cinable gum." No wonder if the sudden advent, at a most critical moment, of the divine lady, who, with her glad look and smiling countenance, was now even more divine than ever, struck the Moor as altogether providential, and, despite the confession which had been brought to his knowledge and the observation of his own eyes, the conviction forced itself upon his soul that she was pure as heaven, that heaven itself interfered on her behalf, that doubtless there was something wrong somewhere, which had deluded him into a belief in her fall, which now he was unable to detect but should discover on a close, patient, and thoughtful scrutiny. And this conviction was so woven into his soul in that instant that henceforth it became a religious faith with him,

which no confession, nor ocular proof, nor even Desdemona's own direct admission of her guilt could undo, though it might discolour and disguise it for the moment. Dear reader! Can you realise this mysterious effect of chance and omen, on the human mind, as an incentive to good deeds or preventive of bad ones, and *vice versâ*? It is the Divinity in our lives, the hand of Providence, the voice of Heaven, the ultimate power of Truth, which subdues the Christian and the Heathen alike and sways the conduct of the most unsuperstitious and unbelieving sceptic and scientist.

From the murdering mood to ceremonious conduct was indeed a hard, abrupt transition: but the Moor's poetic instinct turned him from the precipice of unfaith and hate, over which he was peeping, and the plain close at hand, of faith and love, on which he hoped presently to resettle, effected an instantaneous metamorphosis. He returned the greeting of the Venetian messenger, received his despatch in the most courteous style, and perused it without any apparent perturbation of feeling. Then, he paused, and closed his eyes, and, resting his elbow on the table, held his forehead with his hand. There was dead silence for a few minutes. Desdemona and Lodovico were standing near; Iago was at some distance. Othello again looked into the paper, again closed his eyes, and pinched his forehead.

The silence continued, and Iago was glad to think there was something serious in the despatch to engage the general's attention, and Lodovico, in response to a wink, walked up to chat with him until Othello was done with his brooding. Desdemona, however, felt somewhat puzzled. She had expected to hear that the Senate ordered their return, and had promised herself the pleasure of seeing her old father very soon, but now she felt perplexed by her lord's thoughtful mood, and,

unwilling to disturb him by her questions yet anxious to learn the news at once, she followed her cousin and, even on the way, asked him in a soft tone: "And what's the news, good cousin Lodovico?" The cousin wished to avoid a conversation with her about news, and, pretending not to hear her question, walked on to Iago, and Desdemona joined them almost the same minute.

> "*Des.* And what's the news, good cousin Lodovico?
> *Iago.* I am very glad to see you, signior;
> Welcome to Cyprus.
> *Lod.* I thank you. How does Lieutenant Cassio?
> *Iago.* Lives, sir.
> *Des.* Cousin, there's fall'n between him and my lord
> An unkind breach; but you shall make all well.
> *Oth.* Are you sure of that?
> *Des.* My lord?
> *Oth.* [*Reads*] 'This fail you not to do, as you will—'
> *Lod.* He did not call; he's busy in the paper.
> Is there division 'twixt my lord and Cassio?
> *Des.* A most unhappy one; I would do much
> To atone them, for the love I bear to Cassio.
> *Oth.* Fire and brimstone!
> *Des.* My lord?
> *Oth.* Are you wise?
> *Des.* What, is he angry?
> *Lod.* May be the letter mov'd him;
> For, as I think, they do command him home,
> Deputing Cassio in his government.
> *Des.* Trust me, I am glad on 't.
> *Oth.* Indeed!
> *Des.* My lord?
> *Oth.* I am glad to see you mad.
> *Des.* Why, sweet Othello!
> *Oth.* [*Striking her*] Devil!
> *Des.* I have not deserv'd this."

Iago's oblique answer to Lodovico's enquiry concerning Lieutenant Cassio was uttered in an under-tone, which was scarcely audible even to Desdemona who was pretty near, and the good lady, thinking that Iago hesitated to reveal the mishap which had befallen the lieutenant, and rejoicing that Lodovico might set it right, at once

informed him of the "unkind breach" which had come to exist between Cassio and her lord, and added, "But you shall make all well." The conversation reached the ears of Othello who was pondering over the contents of the letter, and he looked askance at Desdemona and muttered, "Are you sure of that?" The loving wife fancied she was called by her lord, and turned round and addressed him; but he was "busy in the paper," reading it to himself: "This fail you not to do as you will—" The words were not audible, but it was clear he was reading. So, Lodovico returned to the enquiry and asked, with evident surprise, if there was division between Cassio and the general. (Othello had not written to the Senate about the dismissal of Cassio.) The innocent reply which Desdemona readily gave to this enquiry upset the unfortunate Moor whose ears now eagerly caught every word of the conversation:

> "A most unhappy one; I would do much
> To atone them, for the love I bear to Cassio."

Again, an angry muttering—"Fire and brimstone!"—again, Desdemona turned round and addressed her lord, and he looked up and muttered angrily: "Are you wise?" There was no disguising it, he *was* angry, and Desdemona felt quite troubled in her mind. She had expected good things from the letter but, alas, it only made her lord angry! Lodovico witnessed the sad change in her celestial countenance and relieved her from her suspense:

> "May be the letter mov'd him;
> For, as I think, they do command him home,
> Deputing Cassio in his government."

This was certainly happy news to the loving daughter of old Brabantio, and she was delighted, too, that Cassio's trouble was over, with an advantage, and they would soon be on their way to Venice. Of course, she

could not think that the recall was any slight on her lord, for she believed he would be on duty at Venice: "Trust me, I am glad on 't." Another mutter from angry Othello (this time he kept staring at Desdemona), another enquiry from the simple wife, "My lord?": and the maddened husband broke out in *plain, audible* speech:

> "I am glad to see you *mad*."

It was clear that his anger had no reference to the letter. Why was he displeased with her and what was there *mad* in her behaviour? Like a little child rushing to its parent, with perfect confidence in the protectiveness of love, the innocent wife ran to her lord with the sweet words, "Why, sweet Othello!" and inclined against his side to hear what he would say—but alas! only to receive a rude blow on her cheek and to be called a "devil!" The poor wife, who was indeed "a child to chiding," could not help telling him with a child's anger, "I have not deserv'd this;" yet she would not go away but stood out weeping, expecting the kind call which would make amends for everything!

Lodovico was astounded to observe the Moor's rude behaviour to his gentle wife, and could hardly have believed it if he had not seen it. Indeed, whatever opinion might be entertained of the means that had been employed to conquer the bride, no one in Venice would believe that the noble warrior could be guilty of unkindness and barbarity to the sweet daughter of Signior Brabantio. Lodovico advanced to Othello and gently reminded him of his uncivility: but the irate husband could only treat his wife to fresh abuse and order her out of sight. And the further intercession of the cousin and sometime suitor resulted but in insult both to him and the good lady!

"*Lod.* My lord, this would not be believ'd in Venice,
Though I should swear I saw 't. 'T is very much;
Make her amends: she weeps.
Oth. O devil, devil!
If that the earth could teem with woman's tears,
Each drop she falls would prove a crocodile.
Out of my sight!
Des. I will not stay to offend you. [*Going.*
Lod. Truly, an obedient lady;
I do beseech your lordship, call her back.
Oth. Mistress!
Des. My lord?
Oth. What would you with her, sir?
Lod. Who, I, my lord?
Oth. Ay; you did wish that I would make her turn.
Sir, she can turn, and turn: and yet go on,
And turn again. And she can weep, sir, weep.
And she 's obedient: as you say, obedient.
Very obedient: proceed you in your tears.—"

Othello became aware he had lost his temper and been tempted into discourteous conduct to Lodovico. It was best he should say a few words to him on the subject of the message and retire at once; but he did not like to speak in the presence of his wife, whose sight now became quite painful to him, and he commanded her once and again to go away, telling her he would send for her "anon." He then politely informed the messenger that he would return to Venice, in obedience to "the mandate" brought to him, and would give over charge of his place to Cassio; and, inviting him to supper, he went away most abruptly, muttering an unmeaning exclamation which made the hearer suspect that his wits were not safe and he was "light of brain."

"Concerning this, sir,—Oh, well painted passion!—
I am commanded home.—Get you away;
I 'll send for you anon.—Sir, I obey the mandate,
And will return to Venice.—Hence, avaunt!—
[*Exit Desdemona.*
Cassio shall have my place. And, sir, to-night,
I do entreat that we may sup together.
You are welcome, sir, to Cyprus.—Goats and monkeys!" [*Exit.*

Was there anything special in the "mandate" which Othello undertook to obey and which he was specially warned not to disobey? and where was the need for the warning, if the mandate was nothing more than the the commanding of Othello to Venice and the appointment of Cassio in his place? "*This* fail you not to do, as you will———" What was this about? The reader who is in the secret has no need to rack his brains.

Lodovico stood in utter amazement at the strange conduct of the Moor and his sudden exit, and turned to honest Iago for an explanation: and Iago not only prepared him for what was to follow overnight, but told him to "go after" the general and "mark how he continued." Of course, he knew the danger of allowing rest and respite to the Moor!

"*Lod.* Is this the noble Moor whom our full senate
Call all in all sufficient? Is this the nature
Whom passion could not shake? whose solid virtue
The shot of accident nor dart of chance
Could neither graze nor pierce?
Iago. He is much changed.
Lod. Are his wits safe? is he not light of brain?
Iago. He 's that he is; I may not breathe my censure.
What he might be—if what he might he is not—
I would to heaven he were!
Lod. What, strike his wife!
Iago. 'Faith, that was not so well; yet would I knew
That stroke would prove the worst!
Lod. Is it his use?
Or did the letters work upon his blood,
And new-create this fault?
Iago. Alas, alas!
It is not honesty in me to speak
What I have seen and known. You shall observe him,
And his own courses will denote him so
That I may save my speech; do but go after,
And mark how he continues.
Lod. I am sorry that I am deceiv'd in him." [*Exeunt.*

XVI

From Lodovico, Othello went straight into his chamber thoroughly convinced of his wife's folly, yet sorry he had completely lost his self-control. *Goats and monkeys!* Iago had said it would be difficult to bring the culprits to the prospect of actual guilt, even if they were "as prime as goats, as hot as monkeys:" but now, to Othello, they seemed to be quite as shameless as "goats and monkeys." Cassio had "laughed at his vice" and confessed it openly and unblushingly, and "triumphed" over it! and Desdemona acknowledged her "love" for Cassio in the very presence and hearing of her "lord!" Thanks to honest Iago, Othello had witnessed the barefaced confessions of Cassio, and thanks to Lodovico, he had the pleasure of seeing Desdemona "mad," (her words were as good as a confession of her guilt.) *Goats and monkeys!* Good God! they were worse, but he must not forget himself nor ingore the respect due to the Venetian messenger, to the Duke, and the Senate. He *must* obey their mandate, he must. Lodovico's arrival was certainly providential, for there should be no more thought now about murders, no more fear of hell and its unknown punishments. And what a dishonourable end it would be, if now, after the receipt of the message, Cassio was murdered, Desdemona was murdered, and Othello was himself out of existence! Who would believe the tale of the true cause? Who would not think Cassio was murdered because he was appointed to take the general's place? Who would not attribute his own death and his wife's to the fear of an adverse verdict in the new trial? What stronger proof of his dishonourable courtship could he leave behind him than these murders? No, no! there should be no more thought

of murders and deaths! Here were issues more vital to his name and honour than the murder of the culprits, and who was he to punish them with death? Heaven had mercifully sent its messenger to stay him from the perpetration of bloody deeds—to save him from hell! And he must save his name and honour. He should face the trial bravely and cast his faithless wife away like a man and a Christian; and he was so glad her uncle Gratiano had arrived to take charge of her. The uncle was of course as proud and aristocratic as the father and would not recognise the marriage and evidently considered it *infra dig.* to go to him. Where did they lodge—Gratiano and Lodovico? Very likely, at Montano's. He did not care to enquire it of Lodovico—why should he? and he was so beside himself at the time. He should now try to be restored to calm, reclaim himself completely, then send for Desdemona and tell her the contents of the despatch, and after supper—when he should make up for his discourteous conduct to the Venetian messenger—entrust her, as ordered, to the care and guardianship of her uncle. Othello read through the letter once again. "This fail you not to do, as you will—" Certainly, *he* was not the man to fail in his obedience! and the warning was superfluous. He should send for her "anon," but he must yet control his passion and regain his calmness and self-command. And he was so tired both in body and mind, a little lounging and repose might do him good. * * Ha! those soft strains! were they not heavenly? was it not the voice of an angel? was it a devil's? * * Oh, what hell-pit he had thrown himself into and what a resurrection! How the chaos flew away from his soul! How his love returned! Had not this love returned likewise at the moment of that sudden and providential appearance of Desdemona, conducting Lodovico into his pres-

ence, at the very heels of his murderous determination? How was he tilted from that love and faith which heaven seemed to have vouchsafed to him at a most critical moment? * * Othello realised how pitiably he had been tossed from trust to doubt, from doubt to conviction and hate and fury, from fury to calm, and again to doubt and distressing certitude and rage, again to love and back to anger and self-forgetfulness—all in the short space of five hours! How could he rely on the correctness of any conclusion, however convincing, when his judgment had undergone so many and such speedy changes? No doubt, he had witnessed the "ocular proof," of Cassio's confession, but his instinct told him nevertheless that Desdemona was pure and guiltless, that there was some mistake somewhere which he should discover upon a calm and close scrutiny. And he had received a merciful warning from Omniscience, whose electric effect on his soul he could never forget: and the contents of the despatch received from Venice—they showed the hand of Providence, too! It was easier for him to disbelieve the evidence of his senses than to disregard the providential warning, or look upon it as superstition, or ignore its impression and pervert its significance and import. Oh, the lovely angel with her jubilant look, how did he misinterpret her innocent words, and oh, shame of shames! what evil spirit moved his hand to deal that rude blow on the tender cheek! How did he permit himself to curse her, to talk to her cruelly, to detest her very presence and bid her away! How did he forget himself so disgracefully and act the barbarian and lunatic in the very presence of the messenger from Venice? The warrior's eyes were filled with tears: he had disgraced and degraded himself for ever! * * Oh, folly! Was not the very publicity of Desdemona's words—the open declaration of her love and

concern for Cassio—a proof of her innocence? What was there in her feeling glad about Cassio's appointment and promotion, if indeed she was pure and innocent? Had not Othello himself told her some time back that his presence in the island was no longer necessary and the Senate might call him back to Venice, and had she not felt elated by the prospect of going home and seeing her dear old father? Then why did her words drive him into rage and frenzy? Poor timid deer! How lovingly and trustingly she ran to his side and inclined her ear to learn the tidings, but alas, how heartlessly he struck her! How, like a very child, she wept and waited for his pleasure! How his perverted mind thought she wept crocodile tears! How he inclined to suspect her even with Lodovico, her cousin and sometime suitor, and insulted him by his words! How he spoke to him curtly and flung himself away from him abruptly, like a mad man! Everything looked like a dream—a disgraceful dream—and he sincerely wished it *was* a dream. * * Was Cassio playing the devil with him out of spite for his dismissal, and cheating him as well as his honest friend? Was it possible? How could *his* confessions conclusively establish Desdemona's guilt? Oh, no mistake, there was some huge deception somewhere and he was making an ass of himself and ruining his peace and happiness and honour! He should talk to Desdemona, calmly and lovingly, and the whole cloud was sure to be cleared up. It was impossible she was not chaste and innocent. Her purity was an axiom,—no more question about it, no more doubt, no more vacillation in his love—oh, no, no, no! A few minutes' free, frank and loving talk would bring the whole diablerie to light, whoever was the author of it: but not just now. He should now send for her, press her to his heart, assure her of his love and kindness.

They should soon prepare to go to church (it was Sunday) and after their return, they should chat together. And by the way, Lodovico was coming for supper and she should give instructions in the house. * * And for the first time since eleven o' clock, Othello felt he was well and unshakably restored to his love and happiness. Would nothing upset him again?

Poor Desdemona went in with the blow on her cheek and felt quite miserable that her lord was angry with her. What had she done to merit his anger and the blow? Was it all the mischief of the handkerchief? Oh, she was "most unhappy in the loss of it"—she could only pray heaven to defend her from the evil consequences of its loss. But she felt sure the true cause was some other. Doubtless, some state-matters were troubling him, or he would not have forgotten himself so, or run into the fits of rage. Yes, Iago had said it was state-matters which vexed him, and Iago was a wise man. There was evidently something in the despatch, too, which put him out: she could not guess what it was. Did his recall import any humiliation and did he suspect her dear father to have been at the bottom of it? Was it possible? It turned her giddy to think about these things; she should forget all, forget her lord's unkindness, and stead him now in his trouble, and pray for the speedy termination of it. And she took up her guitar and improvised a touching song and accompanied it with her celestial voice.

My good lord is angry, I wot not the cause;
Sing thy grief, my soul, my soul;
In his love and kindness, oh, the woful pause!
Sing thy song, my soul, my soul.

My mother I did lose, my father forsake;
Sing thy grief, my soul, my soul;
My good lord is my all, at his ire I shake;
Sing thy song, my soul, my soul.

Oh, the blow on the cheek! did I take 't amiss?
Sing thy grief, my soul, my soul;
What Power will tell him heal it with a kiss?
Sing thy song, my soul, my soul.

How happy the gentle lady felt when she received the call from her lord! Was it not, indeed, heaven's ready response to her plaint? She at once ran to him and accepted his caresses as if nothing unpleasant had ever occurred, and was so very glad they were not to miss the service that evening. She sent word to Emilia (she had gone home before three and was not yet returned) and kept herself ready in half an hour to accompany her lord to church. And as the loving pair entered the portal of the divine house that Sunday evening, with the good maid following them, no one would have suspected that their hearts had ever undergone any trouble, or that they had come there to say their last prayers in life!

XVII

But how about the devil incarnate? His was ever a busy life, busy with work and mischief, and since his landing in Cyprus, he had not much of rest; least on that day of his choice. It was indeed an eventful afternoon for him, for so many windfalls had come to his aid; withal, his diablerie was in hourly danger of exposure, and his life was in jeopardy! He had never bargained for an enterprise of risk and ruin to himself, still he was on the brink of it, and had to depend not on calculation and certainty but on luck and chance. He had hailed the advent of Lodovico as a godsend, but the inkling he obtained of the news he had brought to the general pierced him to the very marrow of his bone. Othello was commanded home and Cassio was

deputed in his government. Yes, he now remembered the general had remarked one night on the watch that he was sorry for the recent disturbance, for he was hoping to return shortly to Venice. He had evidently written for permission, and great God! obtained it already. And where should honest Iago be, if, before midnight, Othello again veered round, cancelled his murderous resolve and coolly settled to return to Venice, giving over charge of his place to Cassio? Lieutenant Iago, forsooth, but under General Cassio, Governor of Cyprus! True, he had once coveted the lieutenancy and planned to get it; but now "the daily beauty *" in Cassio's life—should his murder be stopped—would make him look quite "ugly." The dismissed man, who had during the last four weeks beseeched Iago's help and advice, to be General, and Iago to be his subordinate and put up daily with the ugly mockery of the lieutenancy he had secured after so much trouble! It must not be. And besides, if Cassio were not off the world, Iago's knavery would be in imminent peril of exposure. No, Cassio must not live! And the honest friend prayed that the Moor might be engaged with one thing or another until midnight and might send him no more calls.

From Lodovico, Iago ran to Roderigo, but the fool was not to be found at his quarters. He waited for a few minutes, but not seeing any prospect of his coming, went home intending to send a messenger for him with a letter. But oh, his vexation when Emilia opened the door for him and bothered him for the handkerchief she had given him even that noon!

"Oh, Iago! do but give it me now," beseeched the wife, "and I'll get it again somehow. She feels so unhappy in the loss of it, and the Moor has been roaring for it like a lion!"

* See note on V. i 19-20.

"'Las, Emilie dear," answered the husband in an unusually kind tone, "I have it not about me just now, I've given it to be copied (he was glad Bianca had suggested the idea to him) and the man is gone out: I've just been there. But I'll get it back to-morrow, at all events. It is strange the trifle should be made so much of; but I assure you the Moor's distemper has been occasioned by nought but state-affairs. Haven't you heard it, Lodovico has just arrived from Venice and brought despatches from the Senate, ordering Othello to Venice and deputing Cassio in the government?"

"Gala-day!" ejaculated the good wife, "my mistress will be so glad to go home and see her dear old father. I've been here since three, and it is time I went to the castle. But do get me the handkerchief, Iago; do, as you love me."

"I will, sweet Emilie." And the simple woman was mightily delighted both with the joyous tidings she had learnt from her husband and the privilege of the full-mouthed kiss he permitted her to exercise at that happy moment.

Emilia's joy was redoubled, just as she was starting for the castle, by the call which the Clown brought her from her mistress and delivered quite ceremoniously: "Tell Emilia we go to church and bid her make haste and come over." Emilia's heart bounded with joy. She had been doing the strawberries on the duplicate these two hours, but they were not all done yet: and now she thought it was no matter, for her husband had promised to return the handkerchief on the morrow, and she was delighted to think that her lord and lady were reconciled.

The Clown's message, however, came as a thunderbolt on Iago. He ran at once to Cassio's and—good luck!—found him at home.

"What's the matter, lad, and why are you so dejected?" asked Iago. "You are as full of phases as the Moon! Even now you were merry, and so soon the cloud is on your face!"

"I am done for, Iago!" replied Cassio: "my mirth and lightness sit the more heavily on me in the end."

"Cheer up, man!" shouted the friend-in-trouble, "there's luck for you, believe me, ere the day dawns. The general and his wife are going to church. Up! go, take yourself within her view and she's sure to talk to you."

"Yes, I think I had better," replied Cassio, cheering up. "Indeed, she told me to walk about the castle and I waited and waited and at last left the place in pursuit of that pest——"

"Bianca? 'las, good creature! Did she quarrel with you in the street?"

"Oh, she ran off too fast for me, and I came home straightway."

"But you are going to her for supper, aren't you?"

"Well—I may or may not. I am perfectly vexed with her petulance."

"Tut, tut, boy! don't you know lovers' quarrels are the renewals of love? They make it the sweeter. Poor thing, don't you disappoint her! I'll meet you there at nine or ten, and we 'll chat about everything."

"Do come, will you?"

"I will."

Iago was himself no regular church-goer, as Cassio knew: but he insisted on his friend's attending the service that night for the chance it would give him of learning the result of his suit. And having seen him off, he proceeded to the beachside and surveyed the route to and from Bianca's house and selected the place where he should crown himself king that night!"

He then went home and scribbled a chit to Roderigo and sent it by a messenger, with special instructions to await his arrival and to conduct him thither urgently.

"Dear Fellow,—I have been to your quarters to tell you the latest news, but you were away. There is especial commission arrived from Venice to depute Cassio in Othello's place, and believe it, the removal of Cassio is imperative and urgent, and you *must* undertake it. Come and see me.—Yours in haste, Iago."

Roderigo should attack Cassio in the dark, and Iago should be close at hand to see that the encounter resulted in the death of both. Apart from the murder of Desdemona, this was absolutely necessary to prevent all danger to Iago's life, and if only a motive could be discovered for malice between the combatants, everything would pass off smoothly. Iago had already thought of it and poor Bianca readily supplied the missing link!

CHAPTER IX

THE FATAL NIGHT

I

THE weary sun sank into the western sea and the moon made her appearance overhead. She was sickly and pale, now bright with a forced smile, now crossed by a white flake, now threatened by a dark cloud; and her attendant in the heavens followed her with unusual vigilance and solicitude. The stars peeped and blinked, contenting themselves with a distant look at their dear queen: she was going down every minute, could she survive the middle of the night? The atmosphere was still and stifling. There was silence all above and it was descending on the earth.

Othello was tempted more than once during the sermon (which he scarcely listened to with attention) to go over the ground of his analysis and argument, to review the many somersaults his soul had been forced to undergo since noon: but he resisted the temptation defiantly; indeed, he was so fatigued in mind that naught but the calm of unquestioning faith could have preserved him from insanity. Withal, he found it hard to compose himself to prayer. He waited impatiently for the moment when he should go home and make a clean breast of everything to his wife, and he was delighted to find her this night doubly absorbed in her devotions; and Emilia, too, on her knees, impressed him with her godliness. With a sigh of relief, he contemplated what a narrow escape his had been from perdition and damnation. Doubt and suspicion were

poison to his soul: it had struggled to settle into faith or unfaith, and was now restored to love and peace. Away with jealousy! but was it away, the wretched feeling which disappears yet never dies, the phœnix which revives from its ashes and "mocks the food it feeds on?" Alas, unfortunate Moor! alas, ill-starred Desdemon! "Who can control his fate?" Just as they were leaving church, the kind lady happened to see Cassio standing near, and, stepped aside to tell him a kind word, Emilia following her. The spark was at once kindled in Othello's soul, and it burst out into a huge flame immediately they reached the castle!

Alas the cloud which has come again over Othello's intellect and his faith! He had fully convinced himself that a huge trick and deception was being played upon him by some one, and even suspected Cassio to be at the bottom of it. He had doubted and discarded the evidence of his eyes and felt thankful to heaven for the timely warning which had flashed the truth upon his soul. He had accepted the love and fidelity of Desdemona as an axiom and determined to bring all diablerie to light by a free and unreserved conversation with her, and he was simply waiting to go home to get through this most easy task for true lovers. But alas! all impressions and intentions were swept away in that minute when he saw Desdemona stepping aside to talk to Cassio. Goats and monkeys!—and in his very presence and the view of so many people! It was a downright insult to him, and that wily woman, so attached to her mistress and ever at her heels, was undoubtedly a go-between and accomplice! What a shame that, despite the disclosures of his honest friend and his own observations, and the criminal's own confessions, he had permitted his love to intervene and plead for a fallen wife! He was certainly making a fool of himself by imagining super-

natural indications and placing faith in superstition. It was nonsense to suppose that Cassio was playing a dangerous trick out of spite for his dismissal. Why was she so fond of him, so solicitous about him, so glad to see him and speak to him? Oh, she *was* a devil—no doubt about it—and she had her own favourite lover and her favourite maid, to boot! Hell of hells! how, indeed, could he swallow his rage? But he must—for the sake of his name and honour. And where was the use of a full and frank disclosure to Desdemona?—to a proved whore! She would never admit her guilt, oh, never, never, not if she was threatened with the sword on her neck. And he must not kill her—no! Of course, she was clever and cunning—yet, how very simple and innocent she looked!—and Iago, who knew his country disposition well, had spoken to him quite enough that morning about the tricks and pranks of Venetian women. For that matter, her own father had said it! It was no good recalling it now; a grave crisis certainly occurred in Othello's life, and he must summon all his powers of patience and self-control. No use racking his brains with argument, the terrible truth was before him and he should face it like a man and warrior. He should avoid all atrocities, entrust his wife to the care of her uncle, and proceed to Venice to face the trial which awaited him: and after his honourable acquittal, he should coolly whistle away his haggard wife. That was his course, and heaven must enable him not to swerve from it. Grief and rage were now overpowering him! Rage was bestial, but grief was permissible—he had just ground for it—and he would let its full flood flow in the very presence and hearing of his faithless wife, and bleed her heart! yes, that was his proper revenge. Thus resolved, Othello left his chamber and was proceeding to Desdemona's, when he met Emilia in the anteroom

which led into her mistress's apartment. He took hold of her hand, dragged her away to a distant corner and, staring a threatening look at her, asked her to tell him what her mistress said to Cassio just as they were returning from church.

Emilia was indeed frightened by the rude handling she received from the Moor, (he had always been kind and courteous to her) but she felt relieved by the question which he asked. The good husband was evidently troubled with jealousy and she was glad she had an opportunity of disabusing him of any false and silly notions that might have entered into his head. Her mistress had told Cassio no more than that his trouble would be at an end before the close of another day. "Was that all!" wondered Othello in his soul: "then, possibly, it was an innocent message from a kind heart." And he felt ashamed of himself and was inclined to revert to faith and love, and continued the conversation with Emilia: * *

"*Oth.* You have seen nothing then?
Emil. Nor ever heard, nor ever did suspect.
Oth. Yes, you have seen Cassio and she together.
Emil. But then I saw no harm, and then I heard
Each syllable that breath made up between them.
Oth. What, did they never whisper?
Emil. Never, my lord.
Oth. Nor send you out o' the way?
Emil. Never.
Oth. To fetch her fan, her gloves, her mask, nor nothing?
Emil. Never, my lord.
Oth. That's strange.
Emil. I durst, my lord, to wager she is honest,
Lay down my soul at stake: if you think other,
Remove your thought; it doth abuse your bosom.
If any wretch have put this in your head,
Let heaven requite it with the serpent's curse!
For, if she be not honest, chaste, and true,
There's no man happy; the purest of their wives
Is foul as slander.
Oth. Bid her come hither; go." [*Exit Emilia.*

Emilia went in to call her mistress, and certainly had said "enough" to remove all suspicion from Othello's mind, and said it in the most forcible style possible. She had never seen, or heard, or suspected anything wrong about her mistress, and she staked her very soul upon her honesty and implored the Moor, for his own sake, not to entertain any vile thought about his angelic wife. Othello was somewhat moved by the words and sat on a chair close by,—musing. "If any wretch have put this in your head, let heaven requite it with the serpent's curse." These words which warned him of the calumny of a villain,—spoken, too, by the villain's own wife!—bore special significance to Othello; and if he had but hinted to Emilia that he had seen his wife's handkerchief in the hands of Cassio, the whole deviltry would have been discovered, for, despite her husband's warning, the loving maid would at once have revealed the truth about it and explained that Iago must have given it to Cassio. But the Moor was in no mood for investigation: he only wanted a confession from the maid and her mistress, but he found it too good to expect. To his jaundiced mind, the very impressiveness of Emilia's speech stamped it as the ready reply of a brazen-faced bawd, and even her prayers at church struck him as hypocritical!

> "She says enough; yet she 's a simple bawd
> That cannot say as much. This is a subtle whore,
> A closet, lock and key, of villainous secrets:
> And yet she 'll kneel and pray; I have seen her do 't."

Alack the day! and when Desdemona presently came and stood by his side, Othello looked up and stared into her eyes! and such a piercing stare the poor girl was quite frightened, and she could only ask her lord, "What horrible fancy's this?"

"*Des.* My lord, what is your will?
Oth. Pray, chuck, come hither.
Des. What is your pleasure?
Oth. Let me see your eyes;
Look in my face.
Des. What horrible fancy 's this?"

Emilia had hoped that her asseverations would put an end to the Moor's misgivings, but she soon discovered her mistake; and, fearing that the enraged husband, who was again betraying the beast in him, might commit some violence on her gentle mistress, she loitered in the room—only to receive a coarse command to go out immediately:

"Some of your function, mistress—
Leave procreants alone and shut the door.
Cough, or cry hem, if any body come:
Your mystery, your mystery! Nay, dispatch." [*Exit Emil.*

Leave the lovers in, and keep watch at the door!—insulting words both to the maid and the mistress!—the keeper of a brothel and the inmate! Oh, why was Othello so beside himself with fury? Emilia knew his trouble and obeyed him, and went out into the verandah, closing the door behind her; but poor Desdemona, too good to resent the cruel affront of her infuriate lord, felt anxious about him and addressed him on her knees. Emilia had indeed hurriedly told her of the jealous mood of her lord, the strange questions he had asked, and the firm assurance she had given him, but the simple wife, strong in the conciousness of her purity, could not hesitate to approach her angry lord, nor think that her word of honour, regarding her loyalty to him, would not at once dispel all misgivings from his mind.

"*Des.* Upon my knees, what doth your speech import?
I understand a fury in your words,
But not the words.
Oth. Why, what art thou?
Des. Your wife, my lord; your true and loyal wife.

Oth. Come, swear it, damn thyself; lest, being like one of heaven, the devils themselves should fear to seize thee. Therefore be double damn'd: swear thou art honest.

Des. Heaven doth truly know it.

Oth. Heaven truly knows that thou art false as hell.

Des. To whom, my lord? with whom? how am I false?

Oth. Ah, Desdemon! away! away! away!"

"*To whom, my lord? with whom? how am I false?*"—Emilia had told her that her lord's suspicion was fixed on Cassio, but she thought it was altogether a silly idea. To suspect her of wantonness with Cassio, because she was kindly disposed to him, spoke kindly of him and pleaded his cause! Absurd! And now that her lord, in spite of her protestation that she was his "true and loyal wife," chose to assert she was false, the innocent wife challenged him to say—to whom, with whom, and how she was false. She fully expected her lord to speak with reference to Cassio; and had he done it and explained why he thought ill of her, she would have exploded all his suspicions, the truth about the handkerchief would have come out, and the devil's mischief would have been discovered. But alas! the very challenge of the guiltless wife convinced the Moor that she was a supersubtle Venetian, and her exceeding beauty made her the more detestable and dangerous! She was a devil with an angel's face—he had only to look at her eyes for a couple of minutes to fall a prey to her fascination and believe her pure and chaste! She might swear by heaven she was honest, but he *knew* she was "false as hell," and it was sheer impudence on her part to ask him "to whom?" "with whom?" and "how?" Her barefaced denial and surprise only aggravated her crime and stimulated his rage which he controlled with very great effort. He had loved her most dearly, and unworthy as she has proved of his love, she should not, by her words, now

tempt him into cruelty and ferocity. And he told her, even in a most kind and tender tone, to go "away, away, away," and burst into tears!

It was indeed a "heavy day" for Desdemona and a most painful sight. She had pitied the Moor for the many and great dangers he had passed through, and he had "loved her that she did pity them," and induced her to marry him even without her father's knowledge and consent. Now, she pitied him for his weeping—she had not given him cause for it—and was ready, loving wife that she was, for the sake of her chosen lord to forsake her dear father for ever!—her old father whose reconciliation and blessing she had been fondly hoping to receive. If indeed her father had, out of spite and to injure and humiliate her lord, brought about his present recall to Venice, if so the old man was lost to Othello, why, he was lost to her as well!

> "Alas the heavy day! Why do you weep?
> Am I the motive of these tears, my lord?
> If haply you my father do suspect
> An instrument of this your calling back,
> Lay not your blame on me; if you have lost him,
> Why, I have lost him too."

Alas, loving wife! Alas, poor daughter! the old father *was* lost to her, and for ever! and all her pity and sacrifice, all her protestations of honesty, all her unresenting gentleness and suffering, were, to the Moor's mind, but illustrations of the wily arts and pranks of Venetian women; and his boundless grief flowed forth in a most touching and pathetic lament:

> "Had it pleas'd heaven
> To try me with affliction, had they rain'd
> All kinds of sores and shames on my bare head,
> Steep'd me in poverty to the very lips,
> Given to captivity, me and my utmost hopes,
> I should have found in some place of my soul
> A drop of patience; but, alas, to make me

> The fixèd figure for the time of scorn
> To point his slow and moving finger at—
> Yet could I bear that too, well, very well:
> But there, where I have garner'd up my heart,
> Where either I must live or bear no life,
> The fountain from the which my current runs
> Or else dries up,—to be discarded thence!
> Or keep it as a cistern for foul toads
> To knot and gender in!—Turn thy complexion there:
> Patience, thou young and rose-lipp'd cherubin,
> Ay, here look grim as hell!"

The bitter disappointment and agony of a man who had loved most dearly and found at last he had loved in vain and must loathe the object of his love! Affliction and indignity, poverty and captivity, even the everlasting scorn and contempt of the world, the Moor could have put up with: but his patience lost colour and turned into the most dreadful rage when he contemplated that he was discarded from the place where he had centred his love and life, and what was worse, had to preserve it for the benefit of base creatures! This was indeed a most unbearable mortification, but he had to endure it: he had to swallow his rage and abstain from killing his faithless wife. And the rage which was suppressed lent its force and bitterness to the grief which broke forth from his soul.

If Desdemona had been the worthless woman her lord had taken her to be, she would certainly have been moved, by his eloquent and pathetic wailing, to confess her crime and fall at his feet; but pure, innocent angel that she was, she could only stare in utmost bewilderment and grief, and affirm her honesty:

> "I hope my noble lord esteems me honest."

Othello had come there, determined not to lose his self-control, not to fly into rage, but every look and word of Desdemona pricked him and provoked him. "I hope my noble lord esteems me honest." Still that

word from her lips! What shameless, unrepenting, hardened sinfulness, yet what angelic appearance! "I hope my noble lord esteems me honest." *Honest!* Othello's rage must find vent at least in words:

> "Oh, ay; as summer flies are in the shambles,
> That quicken even with blowing. Oh, thou weed,
> Who art so lovely fair and smell'st so sweet
> That the sense aches at thee, would thou hadst ne'er been born!"

Why did her lord speak to Desdemona such harsh and bitter words? What had she done to deserve them?

> "Alas, what ignorant sin have I committed?"

Again, the persistent impudence of a shameless strumpet! "What ignorant sin have I committed?" What *ignorant* sin! Must her lord answer it? and did she hope to convince him of her honesty and stamp him a FOOL! "What ignorant sin have I committed?" Well,—he would have answered it with his sword, if he might have done so: but he had to restrain his hand and could pierce the harlot's heart only with his tongue.

> "Was this fair paper, this most goodly book,
> Made to write whore upon? What committed,
> Committed? Oh, thou public commoner!
> I should make very forges of my cheeks,
> That would to cinders burn up modesty,
> Did I but speak thy deeds. What committed?
> Heaven stops the nose at it and the moon winks;
> The bawdy wind that kisses all it meets
> Is hush'd within the hollow mine of earth,
> And will not hear it. What committed?
> Impudent strumpet!"

Othello had indeed to summon all his powers of patience and self-control to subdue his rage! That a woman "so lovely fair" and "so sweet," such a superb beauty, such a heavenly angel in appearance, should be a foul wretch, an unblushing whore, an "impudent strumpet" who boldly denied her wicked deeds and challenged

proof—oh, it was absolutely shocking, revolting, unendurable! "What committed?" Did she expect him to depict her wicked deeds? He should blush fiery red but to *speak* of them, though she did not blush, she who had *committed* them, and a *woman!* Oh, she was dead to all sense of shame, and beyond all question, she was—an "impudent strumpet!"

Stronger abuse than this and greater insult to an innocent wife, it is impossible to conceive: and gentle Desdemona cowered beneath its weight. Too meek to defend herself, she was also too full of goodness and love to retaliate. She was indeed a mere "child to chiding," never had heard such vile and cruel words as her lord had showered upon her, and grieved that he was angry: yet, she mildly repeated her protest—alas, but to invite the worst and coarsest abuse upon her head!

> "*Des.* By heaven, you do me wrong.
> *Oth.* Are not you a strumpet?
> *Des.* No, as I am a Christian;
> If to preserve this vessel for my lord
> From any other foul unlawful touch
> Be not to be a strumpet, I am none.
> *Oth.* What, not a whore?
> *Des.* No, as I shall be sav'd.
> *Oth.* Is 't possible?
> *Des.* Oh, heaven forgive us!"

Even the headlong hallucination of the Moor sustained a momentary check by the solemn and sincere protestations of the simple wife: "No, as I am a Christian;" "No, as I shall be saved." And he could not help exclaiming, "Is't possible?" Was it possible that she was honest and he was unjust in his accusations? Was it possible?

> "If to preserve this vessel for my lord
> From any other foul unlawful touch
> Be not to be a strumpet, I am none."

There was something in those words, something in the manner and voice of the gentle wife, which instinctively impressed the Moor that she was speaking the truth: something warned him that he was precipitating himself into "chaos" and "perdition," and he exclaimed, "Is it possible?" And giving himself a sharp blow on the face with his fist, he closed his eyes and began to deliberate. There was a pause, and he appeared so distressed in mind that the loving wife, guessing his trouble, presently exclaimed, "Oh, heaven forgive us!" May heaven forgive Othello for the harsh and hasty abuse he had heaped on the head of his good wife, and her for any "innocent sin" she might have been guilty of, which had led him into that angry mood! Ashamed to be caught in his perplexity and unable to check the tide of his abuse, the Moor was unconsciously provoked into an ironical apology, and he instantly made his exit, firing his last and worst bombshell at the wife and the maid!

> "I cry you mercy, then;
> I took you for that cunning whore of Venice
> That married with Othello.—You, mistress,
> That have the office opposite to Saint Peter,
> And keep the gate of hell! You, you, ay, you!
> We have done our course; there's money for your pains.
> I pray you, turn the key and keep our counsel." [*Exit.*

Alas the husband who chose to torment himself by playing the imaginary paramour of his own wife! He indeed felt at the moment that he should retire to his chamber, recover his calmness, and review his judgment; and a parting shot (which should share the fate of the rest) was the readiest and easiest outlet for the angry bitterness of his soul! He called loudly to the maid (she was sitting at a distance, cursing husbands as a class, and bewailing the fate of her mistress) and threw her a coin as a reward "for her pains," and rushed away!

II

Desdemona was stunned by the tremendous volley of abuse which her lord had fired at her, and she sank on the floor, "dazed, half-dead." Emilia had just told her about his jealousy of Cassio, but she had set it down as ridiculous and hoped to remove the strange suspicion directly. He would not, however, speak to her about it, nor say how the idea had arisen in his mind, but heaped the coarsest abuse on her head and called her a "weed," a "public commoner," an "impudent strumpet," a "cunning whore!" His suspicions indeed seemed to be wide and general, and all her assurances and oaths served but to confirm his conviction, and provoked his rage! There was a moment when she thought he had perceived his mistake, when he appeared deeply distressed on account of his rash and harsh abuse and she readily prayed for heaven's forgiveness. But oh, the terrible explosion which followed!—it was almost a death-blow to the gentle wife. The kneeling angel was instantly stupefied: she fell back on the floor, and felt as if her life would soon pass away. When Emilia came to her presently and assisted her to sit up, she was "faith, half-asleep."

> "*Emil.* Alas, what does this gentleman conceive?
> How do you, madam? how do you, my good lady?
> *Des.* Faith, half asleep."

And when, after a short while, her quivering ceased and consciousness returned, and the good maid asked in a tender, sympathetic tone, "Good madam, what's the matter with my lord?" (for his loud bewhoring had reached her ears and she feared there was something worse than the silly suspicion about Cassio), the ill-treated orphan could scarcely suppress the feeling which

rent her heart, that her lord was lost to her!

> "*Emil.* Good madam, what's the matter with my lord?
> *Des.* With who?
> *Emil.* Why, with my lord, madam.
> *Des.* Who is thy lord?
> *Emil.* He that is yours, sweet lady.
> *Des.* I have none: do not talk to me, Emilia;
> I cannot weep, nor answer have I none,
> But what should go by water. Prithee, to-night
> Lay on my bed my wedding sheets: remember;
> And call thy husband hither.
> *Emil.* Here 's a change indeed!" [*Exit.*

Oh, the brief, piteous wail!—"I have none," I have no lord: and the poor wife's eyes were filled with tears! She felt too weak to weep and begged Emilia not to talk to her, for she could say nothing without tears and weeping. Her lord was lost to her. He had forsaken her, even as "Barbarie's" lover had forsaken the poor maid, and she should die like her singing the "willow" song. She felt she could not survive the shock she had received, her end seemed quite near, and it was meet she should breathe her last even on her "wedding sheets," and she would tell her maid to shroud her therein. Alas the poor wife's presentiment! Her lord was lost to her, her life was sinking, and it seemed impossible to regain him by any assurance, argument, or appeal of her own. There was but one last hope left her. The "good friend" Iago might "go to him" and intercede with him on her behalf, or he might suggest what she should "do to win" her lord again, who was so strangely lost to her. Failing which, the utter depression she was feeling and the sleep that was coming over her were sure to end in her death, that very night, and she accepted her "wretched fortune" with resignation. Emilia at once ran for her husband: the loving maid was quite alarmed by the sudden "change" she observed in her gentle lady, for she was almost sinking and

could scarcely command the strength to speak, and oh, wept like a very child!

Emilia felt deeply sorry for the Moor's harshness and barbarity, which threatened to send her good lady to a premature grave: and now, she could scarcely think the trouble had arisen on account of the missing handkerchief. Still, she begged her husband to get it even then, if he could, for the Moor had spoken of its mysterious powers. Iago, however, told her he could get it only in the morning. He felt quite as anxious as his wife about the gentle Desdemona, and beshrewed the Moor for his wild temper and behaviour. He sat for a while, athinking as to how the trick had come upon him and what should be done to mend matters, and at length accompanied his wife to the castle.

It was nearly half an hour before Emilia returned with her husband. Soon after the maid left her, Desdemona stretched herself on the floor (she could hardly sit up) and yielded to the sleep that was pressing upon her, and awoke with the thought of her marriage on the brain. She moved into the verandah to see if her maid was returning, but finding nobody within view, she sank down on the floor and began to reflect on her sad plight: and the sickly moon played upon her pale face in loving sympathy!

It was a strange tale—a strange marriage, a strange beginning, a strange end!—her very strange fortune and she blamed no one but herself for it. * * How had she deserved it? She had indeed lost the handkerchief—it was a fault of hers—and her lord had spoken of its mysterious powers and was likely vexed about it. But there was no reason for his misunderstanding her character, for his suspecting her with Cassio or any one, for calling her vile names and stamping her a whore and strumpet, for cursing her, for loathing her

and hating her and wishing she had never been born! What a change in less than six hours! * * Oh, was it indeed the mischief of the strange handkerchief she had lost, and was she blaming her lord for what she had herself brought about and was inevitable? *Was* he lost to her for ever, and that love and kindness which returned to his heart about evening—was it but a dying spark! * * Her father's parting words on the night of her marriage again rushed on her memory:

> "Look to her, Moor, if thou hast eyes to see;
> She has deceiv'd her father, and may thee."

Did those words contain the malediction of a heart-broken parent, or did they convey a prediction of the sad fate she had courted by her strange choice and conduct? And a strange fate indeed! and it was meet she should breathe her last on her very bridal sheets and be shrouded therein! Let her poor father hear of it and take it as her last message to his broken heart! * * To have forsaken father, country, friends, and all, to have rejected so many noble matches her father begged her to accept, and to have chosen the Moor and consecrated herself to his service to live and die for him—all to be called a "public commoner" and told by her lord that he should "make very forges of his cheeks that would to cinders burn up modesty" if he should speak of her deeds! What deeds? What sins but "the loves she bore" him! Yes, those were her sins. And she burst into tears and words:

> "*Des.* 'T is meet I should be us'd so, very meet.
> How have I been behav'd that he might stick
> The small'st opinion on my least misuse?
>
> * * *
>
> I cannot tell. Those that do teach young babes
> Do it with gentle means and easy tasks:
> He might have chid me so; for, in good faith,
> I am a child to chiding."

Indeed, she was not aware that she had ever been guilty of the least misdeed or misbehaviour, for which her lord might have found fault with her. True, she had urged Cassio's suit persistently, and spoken kindly to the poor supplicant even on her return from church, but she did not know it was a fault, and if it was, she might have been told so and chidden and corrected in a gentle way; for "in good faith" she was a child to chiding," ever frightened by harsh treatment and shocked almost to death by any rebuke but what might be administered to a child. Yet, her lord was pleased to bewhore her, and she was sure she was "none such"—her tongue refused to utter the word! How could she bear it?—she who had sacrificed everything for his sake, loved him with a true heart, never swerved from her love and would love him even in "beggarly divorcement!" Indeed, how could she? And she wept and continued her cry even after Iago came before her and addressed her and begged to know what the matter was with her. She could not suppress her tears nor her soliloquy all at once, neither could she open her lips to reveal her trouble to the "good friend." Emilia, however, did this for her, and she could only interpose a word now and then, but not without weeping.

"*Iago.* What 's the matter, lady?
Emil. Alas, Iago, my lord hath so bewhor'd her,
Thrown such despite and heavy terms upon her,
That true hearts cannot bear 't.
Des. Am I that name, Iago?
Iago. What name, fair lady?
Des. Such as she said my lord did say I was.
Emil. He call'd her whore; a beggar in his drink
Could not have laid such terms upon his callat.
Iago. Why did he so?
Des. I do not know; I am sure I am none such.
Iago. Do not weep, do not weep. Alas the day!
Emil. Hath she forsook so many noble matches,
Her father, and her country, and her friends,

To be call'd whore? would it not make one weep?
Des. It is my wretched fortune.
Iago. Beshrew him for 't!
How comes this trick upon him?
Des. Nay, heaven doth know.
Emil. I will be hang'd, if some eternal villain,
Some busy and insinuating rogue,
Some cogging, cozening slave, to get some office,
Have not devis'd this slander; I'll be hang'd else.
Iago. Fie, there is no such man; it is impossible.
Des. If any such there be, heaven pardon him!
Emil. A halter pardon him! and hell gnaw his bones!
Why should he call her whore? who keeps her company?
What place? what time? what form? what likelihood?
The Moor 's abus'd by some most villainous knave,
Some base notorious knave, some scurvy fellow.
O heaven, that such companions thou 'dst unfold,
And put in every honest hand a whip
To lash the rascals naked through the world
Even from the east to the west!
Iago. Speak within door.
Emil. Oh, fie upon them! Some such squire he was
That turn'd your wit the seamy side without,
And made you to suspect me with the Moor.
Iago. You are a fool! go to."

The good maid spoke almost with the love of a mother and guardian, and defended her precious charge in her own rude, loud, and angry style. And she was prepared to fight in the good child's defence against the Moor, against her own husband, against anybody and all! Indeed, she had already told the Moor she would lay down her soul at stake to wager that Desdemona was honest, and one can quite believe she would risk her own life to save the divine creature from harm. To Iago, this was a most critical situation, but he faced it with a hypocrisy and callousness, which were simply diabolical: even he, however, experienced a secret tremor creeping through him when his own wife spoke so vehemently, though but casually, about "some eternal villain;" and his powers of dissimulation were stretched almost to breaking point when he retorted—

"Fie, there is no such man; it is impossible."

And when the irrepressible wife proceeded to curse the "eternal villain" in a loud voice, Iago could only beg her to "speak within door" and would have found himself at his wits' end had not the innocent victim of his intrigue come to his relief with her pathetic wail.

"*Des.* Alas! Iago,
What shall I do to win my lord again?
Good friend, go to him; for, by this light of heaven,
I know not how I lost him. Here I kneel:
If e'er my will did trespass 'gainst his love,
Either in discourse of thought or actual deed,
Or that mines eyes, mine ears, or any sense,
Delighted them, or any other form,
Or that I do not yet, and ever did,
And ever will (though he do shake me off
To beggarly divorcement) love him dearly,—
Comfort forswear me! Unkindness may do much,
And his unkindness may defeat my life,
But never taint my love. I cannot say whore:
It doth abhor me now I speak the word;
To do the act that might the addition earn
Not the world's mass of vanity could make me.
Iago. I pray you, be content; 't is but his humour:
The business of the state does him offence.
And he does chide with you.
Des. If 't were no other,—
Iago. 'T is but so, I warrant.
[*Trumpets within.*
Hark, how these instruments summon to supper!
The messenger of Venice stays the meat:
Go in, and weep not; all things shall be well.—"
[*Exeunt Desdemona and Emilia.*

"If it were no other"—if it were no other than "the business of the state"—which had led to her lord's ill-humour, the good wife would not mind his abuse, and she could at once forget and forgive everything and feel happy at heart. How, like a sincere, sympathetic friend, the villain soothed the trouble of the simple lady, and assured her that all would soon be well, while really

he was expecting and wishing her murder a few hours hence! And how, like a brother, he entreated her not to weep, and urged her to go in, for supper was announced, and the Venetian messenger was a guest and was waiting! Oh, the cruel mockery of fate which made the unhappy wife seek the advice and help of her very destroyer!

III

Just as Iago left Desdemona and emerged into the court before the castle, he met his dupe going up to him and felt somewhat embarrassed by his bold intrusion. Roderigo had himself been trying, during the last three or four days, to see his friend and learn how his affair was progressing, but, unable to get an opportunity and disheartened by the suspicious way in which he was being "dealt with," he had prepared a letter of complaint, in which he gave vent to his feeling of disappointment, expressed his determination to "endure it" no longer, upbraided Iago for having, on the day of landing, needlessly got him "to brave Cassio on the watch" and for "dafting" him from day to day "with some device or other," and threatened to make himself "known" unless his jewels were returned, for he could see no prospect of the promise being fulfilled. He had put this letter in his pocket and was intending to send it to Iago; but when he came to his quarters, to his great surprise he found a messenger waiting for him, with a note from his friend. He opened it eagerly and read it, once and again, but thrust it away into his pocket with evident disappointment. He could scarcely credit the tale about the "especial commission from Venice," and did not quite understand what on earth Iago meant by the new task he proposed to impose upon him—"the re-

moval of Cassio!" He was however glad he had an opportunity for seeing his dubious friend and speaking out his mind to him, and at once followed the messenger; but, not finding Iago at his lodging, he proceeded straight to the castle and met him returning: and the two friends forthwith entered into a conversation:

"How now Roderigo!

Rod I do not find
That thou deal'st justly with me.

Iago. What in the contrary?

Rod. Every day thou dafts me with some device, Iago; and rather, as it seems to me now, keep'st from me all conveniency than suppliest me with the least advantage of hope. I will indeed no longer endure it, nor am I yet persuaded to put up in peace what already I have foolishly suffered.

Iago. Will you hear me, Roderigo?

Rod. I have heard too much, and your words and performances are no kin together.

Iago. You charge me most unjustly.

Rod. With nought but truth. I have wasted myself out of my means. The jewels you have had from me to deliver to Desdemona would half have corrupted a votarist; you have told me she hath received them, and returned me expectations and comforts of sudden respect and acquaintance, but I find none.

Iago. Well, go to; very well.

Rod. Very well! go to! I cannot go to, man; nor 'tis not very well: nay, I think it is scurvy, and begin to find myself fopp'd in it.

Iago. Very well.

Rod. I tell you 'tis not very well. I will make myself known to Desdemona. If she will return me my jewels, I will give over my suit and repent my unlawful solicitation. If not, assure yourself I will seek satisfaction of you.

Iago. You have said now.

Rod. Ay, and said nothing but what I protest intendment of doing.

Iago. Why, now I see there's mettle in thee, and even from this instant do build on thee a better opinion than ever before. Give me thy hand, Roderigo. Thou hast taken against me a most just exception; but yet, I protest, I have dealt most directly in thy affair.

Rod. It hath not appear'd.

Iago. I grant indeed it hath not appear'd, and your suspicion is not without wit and judgment. But, Roderigo, if thou hast that in thee indeed, which I have greater reason to believe now than ever, (I mean purpose, courage and valour) this night show it; if thou the next night following enjoy not Desdemona, take me from this world with treachery

and devise engines for my life.

Rod. Well, what is it? is it within reason and compass?

Iago. Sir, there is especial commission come from Venice to depute Cassio in Othello's place.

Rod. Is that true? why, then Othello and Desdemona return again to Venice.

Iago. Oh, no: he goes into Mauritania and taketh away with him the fair Desdemona, unless his abode be lingered here by some accident. Wherein none can be so determinate as the removing of Cassio.

Rod. How do you mean, removing of him?

Iago. Why, by making him uncapable of Othello's place; knocking out his brains.

Rod. And that you would have me to do?

Iago. Ay, if you dare do yourself a profit and a right. He sups to-night with a harlotry, and thither will I go to him; he knows not yet of his honourable fortune. If you will watch his going thence, which I will fashion to fall out between twelve and one, you may take him at your pleasure; I will be near to second your attempt, and he shall fall between us. Come, stand not amazed at it, but go along with me; I will show you such a necessity in his death that you shall think yourself bound to put it on him. It is now high supper-time, and the night grows to waste. About it!

Rod. I will hear further reason for this.

Iago. And you shall be satisfied." [*Exeunt.*

Oh, the consummate art by which the villain reconciled the discontented and distrusting dupe who refused even to "give his hand" to him! the soft answers by which he wheedled him, and the subtle flattery by which he coaxed him to stick fast to his hope, to believe that success was at hand, and to half-consent to do an act of "courage and valour," that night, to do himself "a profit and a right!" Roderigo stood "amazed" at the murderous proposal of his friend and would not undertake the business without hearing "further reason" for it, and, of course, Iago was quite prepared to satisfy him in this respect. It was, however, already "high supper-time," and Iago hied the dupe to his quarters. They should meet after supper at Iago's place, and he would then explain both his reasons and his plans.

IV

In the retirement of his chamber, Othello again perceived the blind precipitancy which was hurling him into hell and depriving him of the power of right judgment. Why had he exhibited such a temper against his wife and abused her in the vilest manner and spoken to her as to a public prostitute? What was it that had upset the happy tranquillity which had reigned in his mind while at church? And why should Desdemona's gracious condescension and attention to Cassio, on her way home, have unsettled Othello so miserably and so unreasonably? * * Oh, it was clear he had been looking at everything, with green spectacles! Neither the strong asseverations of Emilia nor the solemn protestations of his gentle wife could stop the hallucination produced on his mind nor check his headlong descent. The loving maid was ready to stake her very soul on her mistress's honesty. If *she* was not honest, chaste, and true, (she said) there was no man happy; the purest of their wives was foul as slander. And the simple wife spoke to him with the innocence of a child and swore she was his "true and loyal wife." Her words still rang in his ears: "No, as I am a Christian;"—"No, as I shall be sav'd."

> "No, as I am a Christian;
> If to preserve this vessel for my lord
> From any other foul unlawful touch
> Be not to be a strumpet, I am none."

Had not those words moved him and touched his very soul with their truthfulness? Yet, he had condemned her as a strumpet, a whore, a public commoner! * * The noble Moor, never accustomed to the weeping mood, shed tears in profusion! He realised that he had

been conducting himself in downright disregard even of the guidance of Omniscience. Even the divine hand had brought his wife and Lodovico before him at the moment of his murderous resolve. Even the divine voice uttered those words—"No, as I am a Christian;" —"No, as I shall be saved." Even the divine instinct in him was warning him in his worst perplexity and confusion, that Desdemona was pure and honest, that he was the dupe of a huge delusion and deception. Where was the deception? who was deceiving him? was it Cassio? or could it indeed be Iago? * * Good God! perchance it was Iago, for he recollected what a thrill had passed through his nerves when Emilia spoke those words which bore special significance to him:

> "If any wretch have put this in your head,
> Let heaven requite it with the serpent's curse!"

Was Iago indeed a villain? That honest indignation he exhibited at noon, oh, was it but a pretence, a "trick of custom?" Was he, in truth, a serpent—a devil! Othello felt giddy at this idea which now flashed upon his brain. Was the whole world turning topsy-turvy! He could not conceive any motive for the devil to "ensnare" him. * * Othello found it impossible to think, to scrutinise, and judge in his perplexed condition. He should do it later on. Two things were, however, clear to his mind. Desdemona's honesty was unquestionable: it was not merely an axiom to him, but a revelation, for which he felt thankful to heaven. And it was certain there was deception somewhere. Whether Cassio was a villain, or Iago, or some one else, he should discover by and by. He should see Iago and countermand the order he had given him for the murder of Cassio: and he should clear up everything by a full, free, and unreserved conversation with Desdemona, and unravel the whole deviltry the next morning. * * Trumpets announced

that supper was ready and Othello remembered that he had invited Lodovico. He presently received the guest with the utmost courtesy, and sent word to Desdemona that he was come and she was awaited.

Desdemona was scarcely recovered from the effects of the shock she had received, though her spirits were partially revived with the hope the "good friend" had given her, that nought but "the business of the state" had upset her lord's even temper. How, indeed, could she feel vexed about the abuse he had showered on her, in his distracted mood? She prayed that heaven, in its infinite mercy, might soon restore him to her; and weak and feeble as she felt, and unfit for company, she proceeded to him directly she received his call, and welcomed the noble guest and cousin. And Lodovico was pleased to mark the penitent mood of the Moor (albeit he was not altogether free from fret and agitation) no less than the forgiveness of the insulted wife.

The supper was got through pleasantly enough. Despite her depression, the gentle lady was not wanting in her courteous attentions to the guest, nor in loving and agreeable deportment to her lord; but she was timid, cautious, and chary of conversation. The talking was monopolised by Othello and the guest. The latter indeed "spoke well" about one thing and another, and gave an interesting account of his voyage from Venice. Othello, too, was tempted to seek a temporary rest to his mind in a graphic narrative of his own experiences of five weeks since; and the supper came to a close soon after eleven o'clock. Othello proposed to follow Lodovico on his way, for a short distance. The guest, however, besought the host to "trouble himself no further," but Othello was disposed for a short walk, for it would "do him good," and accompanied Lodovico, having bidden Desdemona to go to bed instantly:

"Get you to bed on the instant; I will be returned forthwith: dismiss your attendant there; look it be done."

Lodovico was returning to Montano's (at the southern end of the beach-road) and Othello would accompany him to the turning, and return home, seeing Iago on his way to cancel the order about Cassio. Alas! how different would have been the course of events if Othello had not been tempted to sit, for a while, at the beach, and was not literally lost in rumination!

V

Immediately after Othello went out, Desdemona proceeded to disrobe herself that she might retire to bed at once, in accordance with her lord's command. She was anxious not to displease him now, in the least particular, lest he should fall back into his infuriate mood, and though still he was stiff and stubborn, she hoped his love and kindness would soon return. She sat on a chair in the anteroom to her bedchamber and told Emilia to give her the "nightly wearing," and go home without waiting to undress her, for her lord had expressly bidden her to dismiss her attendant.

"*Emil.* How goes it now? he looks gentler than he did.
Des. He says he will return incontinent;
He hath commanded me to go to bed,
And bade me to dismiss you.
Emil. Dismiss me!
Des. It was his bidding; therefore, good Emilia,
Give me my nightly wearing, and adieu:
We must not now displease him.
Emil. I would you had never seen him!
Des. So would not I; my love doth so approve him,
That even his stubbornness, his checks, his frowns,
(Prithee unpin me) have grace and favour in them."

Emilia feared that the calmness of the Moor might be the calm of cruel determination—that he might be intending to perpetrate some violence on the meek wife—

and tarried, assisting her mistress to undo the fastenings of her dress, and laying by the jewels and paraphernalia. Indeed, while her mistress was at supper, the good maid had been worrying her mind as to what was going to befall her gentle lady, and cursed the day when she advised her to fall into the grasp of the wild beast. How very happy both she and her dear mistress should have been, throughout life, if they had remained without the shackles of marriage! She had remembered her mistress's special direction about the wedding sheets and spread them on the bed, and hoped (and believed it was her mistress's hope as well) their sanctity might recall the Moor to his love and kindness:

> " *Emil.* I have laid those sheets you bade me on the bed.
> *Des.* All's one.—Good father, how foolish are our minds!
> If I do die before, prithee, shroud me
> In one of these same sheets.
> *Emil.* Come, come: you talk."

Desdemona was not now very particular about "those sheets" being laid on her bed. It was a foolish fancy which came into her head when, under the effect of the shock she had received, she felt her death was near at hand, and, forsaken by her lord, she thought she should, like "Barbarie," quit her life, singing even the "willow" song, and liked to breathe her last on her bridal sheets, and wished that she should be shrouded therein and that her father should hear of it and take it as the last message from his dying daughter. That fear had now passed away, and she was hoping for the return of her lord's love and had fully forgiven him in her heart, though she was vexed that he should have entertained such cruel suspicions about her and "thrown such despite and heavy terms upon her as true hearts could not bear." Yet, somehow, the evil presentiment returned at this moment, and she told Emilia to shroud her in

those sheets if she died before her: and she not only remembered the lovelorn "Barbarie" and her song, but felt she could scarcely refrain from "hanging her head all at one side" and singing it even like her. Just two hours back, her thoughts had been about that sad song, about her death, and her unspoken message to her poor father: and now when she tried to dismiss it from her mind, she could not resist other thoughts, more unwelcome still,—how stubbornly she had rejected her good father's entreaties on behalf of Lodovico, and and how happy the old man would have felt it she had accepted the cousin, who, she was tempted to remark was "a proper man" and "spoke well" (she had found it even at the supper).

> "*Des.* My mother had a maid call'd Barbarie;
> She was in love, and he she lov'd prov'd mad
> And did forsake her. She had a song of 'willow;'
> An old thing 't was, but it express'd her fortune,
> And she died singing it. That song to-night
> Will not go from my mind; I have much to do,
> But to go hang my head all at one side,
> And sing it like poor Barbarie.—Prithee, dispatch.
> *Emil.* Shall I go fetch your night-gown?
> *Des.* No, unpin me here.—
> This Lodovico is a proper man.
> *Emil.* A very handsome man.
> *Des.* He speaks well.
> *Emil.* I know a lady in Venice would have walked barefoot to Palestine for a touch of his nether lip."

But the song still haunted her imagination and, while Emilia was assisting her to undress, the orphan child crooned the snatches in a soft voice and poured forth the trouble in her heart.

> "*The poor soul sat sighing by a sycamore tree,*
> *Sing all a green willow;*
> *Her hand on her bosom, her head on her knee,*
> *Sing willow, willow, willow.*
> *The fresh streams ran by her, and murmur'd her moans;*
> *Sing willow, willow, willow;*

Her salt tears fell from her, and soften'd the stones;
Sing willow, (Lay by these) *willow, willow.*
(Prithee, hie thee; he 'll come anon)
Sing all a green willow must be my garland.
Let nobody blame him; his scorn I approve,—
(Nay, that 's not next.—Hark! who is't that knocks?
Emil. It 's the wind.)
Des. [Singing]
I call'd my love false love; but what said he then?
Sing willow, willow, willow:
If I court moe women, you 'll couch with moe men.—
So, get thee gone; good night. Mine eyes do itch;
Doth that bode weeping?
Emil. 'T is neither here nor there."

Indeed, how could she help singing that sad ditty—the poor, forsaken wife who felt that her fortune was worse than "Barbarie's," for her lord had got wild without cause (at all events none from her), showered undeserved abuse on her and possibly was going to "shake her off!" Was it a foreshadowing of the end? She could not say: but her eyes itched, and she feared it boded weeping, (she had heard it said so, though Emilia did not think it was a sign any way); and much as she feared her lord might return before she dismissed Emilia and retired to bed, (and she mistook the very rustling of the wind as a knock at the door) she was tempted to enter into a conversation with her maid about the possible existence of women who "abused their husbands in that gross kind"—her pure lips could not utter the coarse word! She thought that men judged very lightly of women, and found that her own lord was not free from infirmities, that, despite the shock he had caused her, she must forgive him for his gross accusation and abuse, for she approved even his "stubbornness" and "checks" and "frowns!"

"*Des.* Oh, these men, these men!—
Dost thou in conscience think,—tell me, Emilia,—
That there be women do abuse their husbands
In such gross kind?

Emil. There be some such, no question.
Des. Wouldst thou do such a deed for all the world?
Emil. Why, would not you?
Des. No, by this heavenly light!
Emil. Nor I neither by this heavenly light;
I might do 't as well i' the dark.
Des. Wouldst thou do such a deed for all the world?
Emil. The world 's a huge thing; it is a great price for a small vice.
Des. In troth, I think thou wouldst not.

Emil. In troth, I think I should; and undo 't when I had done. Marry, I would not do such a thing for a joint-ring, nor for measures of lawn, nor for gowns, petticoats, nor caps, nor any petty exhibition; but, for the whole world,—why, who would not make her husband a cuckold to make him a monarch? I should venture purgatory for 't.

Des. Beshrew me, if I would do such a wrong
For the whole world.

Emil. Why, the wrong is but a wrong i' the world; and having the world of your labour, 't is a wrong in your own world, and you might quickly make it right.

Des. I do not think there is any such woman.

Emil. Yes, a dozen; and as many to the vantage as would store the world they played for.

But I do think it is their husbands' faults
If wives do fall. Say that they slack their duties,
And pour our treasures into foreign laps,
Or else break out in peevish jealousies,
Throwing restraint upon us; or say they strike us,
Or scant our former having in despite;
Why, we have galls, and though we have some grace,
Yet have we some revenge. Let husbands know
Their wives have sense like them; they see and smell
And have their palates both for sweet and sour,
As husbands have. What is it that they do
When they change us for others? Is it sport?
I think it is; and doth affection breed it?
I think it doth; is 't frailty that thus errs?
It is so too; and have not we affections,
Desires for sport, and frailty, as men have?
Then let them use us well; else let them know,
The ills we do, their ills instruct us so."

Emilia did not of course mean all she said. Coarse in speech and manners, she was not lax in her morals: indeed, how could she be, the maid that moved with Desdemona and had served her good mother? She spoke in a jesting strain but to humour her mistress, who was

sadly depressed in spirits, and doubtless she poured forth the grudge which she had long borne against her unkind husband; but Desdemona did not mistake her, though, unwilling to prolong the conversation, she bade good night to her and retired.

> "Good night, good night; heaven me such uses send,
> Not to pick bad from bad but by bad mend!"

The sweet angel, too good for this earth, had sung her dirge! and, depressed and disappointed, yet full of hopeful expectation that her lord would presently come and speak to her kindly and tenderly, she soon fell into a slumber—alas, for what an awakening!

VI

Roderigo had met Iago after supper and had "satisfying reasons" given him for undertaking the murder of Cassio. If the deed was not accomplished, it was clear that all his past exertion and expense would come to nought, for Othello was going "into Mauritania," taking away "with him the fair Desdemona." If Cassio were done away with, it would be a double luck to Roderigo. He would be rid of a rival who was the lady's special favourite, and Othello, too, would get into trouble, for the murder would be laid at his door, and he would be on his trial for having instigated it in consequence of his supersession. So said Iago, and Roderigo readily believed, and determined to screw up his courage and play a bold game that night. And there was nothing to be lost by following his friend's advice and direction: it was "but a man gone"—one man less in the world! That was all, and the dupe placed himself completely at the disposal of the friend!

Iago took Roderigo along with him and hid him inside a small stranded "bark"* lying on the shore, very

* See note on V. i. 1.

near the road; and himself proceeded to Bianca's (at the northern end) to keep chatting there until darkness set in, so that Cassio's return might fall between twelve and one (when the moon would set—it was the eighth day of the lunar month). He met with a hearty welcome from the friend and his mistress (they had already got over their petty difference of the evening), and was glad to find the handkerchief again in the hands of Bianca, who now insisted on copying out the work, although Cassio was not very particular about it. And, having for a couple of hours engaged the friends in merry talk and entertained them with merry songs he returned to the "young quat" in the bark, and "rubbed" him and kept him ready!

> " Here, stand behind this bark; straight will he come:
> Wear thy good rapier bare, and put it home.
> Quick, quick; fear nothing; I 'll be at thy elbow.
> It makes us, or it mars us; think on that,
> And fix most firm thy resolution.
> *Rod.* Be near at hand; I may miscarry in 't.
> *Iago.* Here, at thy hand; be bold and take thy stand." [*Retires.*

And Iago and Roderigo having disposed themselves in their proper positions, each could indulge in a short monologue before Cassio arrived at the spot.

> " *Rod.* I have no great devotion to the deed;
> And yet he hath given me satisfying reasons:
> 'Tis but a man gone. Forth, my sword; he dies.
> *Iago.* I have rubb'd this young quat almost to the sense,
> And he grows angry. Now, whether he kill Cassio,
> Or Cassio him, or each do kill the other,
> Every way makes my game. Live Roderigo,
> He calls me to a restitution large
> Of gold and jewels that I bobb'd from him
> As gifts to Desdemona;
> It must not be. If Cassio do remain,
> He hath a daily beauty in his life
> That makes me ugly; and, besides, the Moor
> May unfold me to him; there stand I in much peril:
> No, he must die.—But so; I hear him coming."

With all his foresight and intelligence, Iago could not guard against all possibility of error. He had not calculated that Cassio might wear a 'coat of proof,' and had given no special instructions to the dupe, and Roderigo's thrust was in the wrong place and earned him a bad return which brought him to the ground.

> "*Rod.* I know his gait, 'tis he.—Villain, thou diest!
> [*Makes a pass at Cassio.*
> *Cas.* That thrust had been mine enemy indeed,
> But that my coat is better than thou know'st;
> I will make proof of thine. [*Draws & wounds* Roderigo.
> *Rod.* Oh, I am slain!"

Iago, however, was not to be foiled in his plan. His quick ear caught the clink of Roderigo's thrust, and he at once ran up from behind and struck Cassio on the leg, and the poor Florentine fell down with a cry:

> "I am maim'd for ever. Help, ho! murther! murther!"

And the cry reached the ears of Othello, who was seated on the "sea-bank," almost within a hundred yards of the spot. The devil's machinery was set in motion—oh, what human hand can stay it!

VII

Having dealt his worst blow to Cassio, Iago at once ran to his lodging (which was not far from the place), undressed himself and was apparently preparing to go to bed, as Emilia thought, when he exclaimed—"Ho! what direful yell is that? Murder! Sure, some bloody deed at the beach!" And he at once lighted a lantern and took his weapons, and rushed out in hot haste, telling his wife he would return presently. Emilia had heard no cry, yet was startled when her husband spoke of it, and shut herself up in the house, full of fear and anxiety. It was indeed the night which should "make or fordo" Iago; and if his friends were not both dead

already, he should make sure of them by a final blow, before a crowd collected on the spot (and he raised a hue and cry as he ran). And if only a motive could be discovered for malice between the combatants (and he had already thought of it), their mutual murder would be a plain, though pitiful, incident. But the devil who sported with others' lives was destined to throw his own life into the game and feel the bitter anguish of his sport!

Lodovico returned to Montano's after supper, and all three—Lodovico, Gratiano and Montano—chatted together for an hour, and then, Gratiano and Lodovico proceeded to Cassio's lodging with the Commision they had brought him from the Senate. Cassio, however, was not to be found at his place: he had gone to his mistress and had not yet returned, though it was past twelve and the moon was about to set. They waited for a while and moved towards the beach, hoping to meet Cassio on his way home, and it was as well they enjoyed a short walk. But they had scarcely reached the road when they heard a cry of murder, and they stood still, looking for "more help" before they went "in to the cry." And in a few minutes, Iago arrived "in his shirt, with light and weapons" and was boldly proceeding to the spot (Lodovico could not help remarking he was "a very valiant fellow")—though, alas, only to find that Cassio was not dead and a final blow could not be dealt, as others were near at hand!

Enter LODOVICO *and* GRATIANO.

"*Cas.* What, ho! no watch? no passage? murther! murther!
Gra. 'T is some mischance; the voice is very direful.
Cas. Oh, help!
Lod. Hark!
Rod. Oh, wretched villain!
Lod. Two or three groan; it is a heavy night;
These may be counterfeits; let 's think 't unsafe
To come in to the cry without more help.

Rod. Nobody come? then shall I bleed to death.

Enter IAGO *with a light.*

Lod. Hark!
Gra. Here 's one comes in his shirt, with light and weapons.
Iago. Who 's there? whose noise is this that cries on murther?
Lod. We do not know.
Iago. Did not you hear a cry?
Cas. Here, here! for heaven's sake, help me!
Iago. What 's the matter?
Gra. This is Othello's ancient, as I take it.
Lod. The same indeed; a very valiant fellow.
Iago. What are you here that cry so grievously?
Cas. Iago? Oh, I am spoil'd, undone by villains!
Give me some help.
Iago. Oh me, lieutenant! what villains have done this?
Cas. I think that one of them is hereabout,
And cannot make away.
Iago. Oh, treacherous villains!—
What are you there? come in, and give some help.
[*To Lodovico and Gratiano.*
Rod. Oh, help me here!
Cas. That 's one of them.
Iago. Oh, murd'rous slave! Oh, villain!
[*Stabs Roderigo.*
Rod. Oh, damn'd Iago! Oh, inhuman dog!
Iago. Kill men i' the dark!—Where be these bloody thieves?—
How silent is this town!—Ho! murther! murther!—
What may you be? are you of good or evil?
Lod. As you shall prove us, praise us.
Iago. Signior Lodovico?
Lod. He, sir.
"*Iago.* I cry you mercy. Here 's Cassio hurt by villains.
Gra. Cassio!"

It was something that, in the presence of Lodovico and Gratiano, Cassio pointed out to Roderigo as one of his assailants, and Iago could, under the pretext of avenging the base attack on his friend, deal a death-blow to the dupe who still manifested signs of life and cried for help. And what could poor Iago do under the circumstances but attend to the wound of his "brother," "bind it with his shirt" (in the presence of all assembled), fasten the bandage with a garter (which he was

obliged to borrow from a bystander, being himself in his night-dress), order a chair for bearing him easily to his house, and, as soon as it was brought, see that he was carefully borne away and himself run to "fetch the general's surgeon?"

"*Iago.* How is 't, brother?
Cas. My leg is cut in two.
Iago. Marry, heaven forbid!
Light, gentlemen; I 'll bind it with my shirt.

Enter BIANCA.

Bian. What is the matter, ho? who is 't that cried?
Iago. Who is 't that cried!
Bian. Oh, my dear Cassio! my sweet Cassio! Oh, Cassio, Cassio, Cassio!
Iago. Oh, notable strumpet!—Cassio, may you suspect
Who they should be that have thus mangled you?
Cas. No.
Gra. I am sorry to find you thus; I have been to seek you.
Iago. Lend me a garter.—So.—Oh, for a chair,
To bear him easily hence!
Bian. Alas, he faints! Oh, Cassio, Cassio, Cassio!
Iago. Gentlemen all, I do suspect this trash
To be a party in this injury.—
Patience awhile, good Cassio.—Come, come;
Lend me a light.—Know we this face or no?
Alas, my friend and my dear countryman
Roderigo! no: yes, sure: yes, 'tis Roderigo.
Gra. What, of Venice?
Iago. Even he, sir; did you know him?
Gra. Know him! ay.
Iago. Signior Gratiano? I cry you gentle pardon;
These bloody accidents must excuse my manners,
That so neglected you.
Gra. I am glad to see you.
Iago. How do you, Cassio?—Oh, a chair, a chair!
Gra. Roderigo!
Iago. He he, 't is he.—[*A chair brought in.*] Oh, that 's well said; the chair.
Some good man bear him carefully from hence;
I 'll fetch the general's surgeon.—[*To Bianca*] For you, mistress,
Save you your labour.—He that lies slain here, Cassio,
Was my dear friend; what malice was between you?
Cas. None in the world; nor do I know the man.

Iago. [*To Bianca*] What, look you pale?—Oh, bear him out o' the air.—[*Cas. & Rod. are borne off.*
Stay you, good gentlemen.—Look you pale, mistress?—
Do you perceive the gastness of her eye?—
Nay, if you stare, we shall hear more anon.—
Behold her well; I pray you, look upon her·
Do you see, gentlemen? nay guiltiness will speak,
Though tongues were out of use."

Who could say that Iago was not indeed better than a "brother" to Cassio? Who could pooh-pooh his suspicion of Bianca (who had no sooner heard of the mishap than she alighted on the spot), or his reproach of her as a "notable wanton" and a party to the injury? Who could fail to admire the superior wisdom with which he entreated Cassio to remain patient awhile, turned to identify the assailant, guessed it was "his friend and dear countryman Roderigo," and at length removed all doubt on the point by handling his "usurped beard" and pulling it off to the amazement of the spectators! And who could help being astonished by the shrewdness with which he noted, and the readiness with which he invited Gratiano, Lodovico and the rest to observe, the pale, terror-struck appearance of Bianca, the "gastness of her eye," and her "staring," which betrayed her guilt in spite of her silence? It was clear to every one present that Roderigo was a lover (in disguise) of Bianca's, and was set on by her to murder Cassio on his return from her place (where he had supped that night).

The news of the mishap having at once spread in the town, people rushed to the scene in large numbers and "the noise was high" in the streets; and Emilia, seeing that her husband had not yet returned, went out to him to learn what had happened. And Iago presently commissioned her to run to the castle and tell the general and his lady about the foul occurrences, and marched off poor Bianca under arrest!

Enter EMILIA.

"*Emil.* Alas, what 's the matter? what 's the matter, husband?
Iago. Cassio hath here been set on in the dark
By Roderigo and fellows that are scap'd;
He 's almost slain, and Roderigo quite dead.
Emil. Alas, good gentleman! alas, good Cassio!
Iago. This is the fruits of whoring.—Prithee, Emilia,
Go know of Cassio where he supp'd to-night.—
What, do you shake at that?
Bian. He supp'd at my house; but I therefore shake not.
Iago. Oh, did he so? I charge you, go with me.
Emil. Oh, fie upon thee, strumpet!
Bian. I am no strumpet; but of life as honest
As you that thus abuse me.
Emil. As I? fie upon thee!
Iago. Kind gentlemen, let 's go see poor Cassio dress'd.
Come, mistress, you must tell 's another tale.—
Emilia, run you to the citadel,
And tell my lord and lady what hath happ'd.—
Will you go on afore?—[*Aside*] This is the night
That either makes me or fordoes me quite." [*Exeunt.*

Doubtless, Iago's life was in imminent danger, if Othello did not put an end to Desdemona and to himself after hearing the tidings from Emilia: and in the presence of Gratiano and others, he could not send a better message than that Cassio was "*almost* slain."

VIII

After bidding good night to Lodovico, Othello had almost turned his steps towards the castle when he was tempted to sit at the beach for a few minutes and recapitulate his situation. The soft breeze was inviting and welcome to the Moor, and the pale moon, hastening to her rest, seemed to bear him a special message. Why was she weak and sickly, and was it a spot which he espied on her half-hidden form?

Othello found it an impossible task to recollect and review the vacillations his mind had undergone since eleven o'clock that morning. It seemed as if he had

lived through a period of twelve months instead of twelve hours, and the unalloyed happiness he had enjoyed in the company of a heavenly wife seemed to belong to a time long past! The stages by which suspicion had gained entrance into his mind, the circumstances which had developed it into a conviction and whipped him into rage and vengeance, the manner in which he had fallen from love to hate and revenge, then returned to calmness and faith, and relapsed into unfaith and unbearable grief—all this now seemed a fleeting vision, a maddening dream, of the past, defying all efforts of memory, all analysis and scrutiny. * * Unaccustomed to mental strain, the Moor was altogether exhausted with the shocks and convulsions he had experienced since noon, and his nerves were in need of repose and relaxation; yet, he struggled against nature, and tried to coax his memory to begin at the beginning of his trouble and trace it to the present, but oh, it was impossible! * * He could only remember a few broad facts. The miserable anguish he had endured on the rack of jealousy, which had driven him to resolve on murder and suicide and welcome the very punishments of hell: the infinite grief and pity and disappointment which had prevailed in his soul and found vent in a most bitter wail: the indignant outburst of Iago which had subdued him in a trice, and hammered the love and honesty of the friend into his very soul: the "ocular" demonstration, which had been given him, of his wife's guilt, rather, of Cassio's confesssions and the handkerchief in his possession: the soothing influence of Desdemona's heavenly form on his troubled soul, which had repeatedly rescued him from "chaos:" the fascination of her "body and beauty," and the enchantment of her melodies: the providential advent of Lodovico and Desdemona pat at the moment of his murderous resolution, and the strange despatch

he had received, which struck him and impressed him, in spite of everything, as Heaven's direct interference on behalf of its darling child: the sincere and solemn protestations of the innocent wife—"No, as I am a Christian;"—"No, as I shall be saved"—in which the very Angel of Truth seemed to have spoken to him: the rude warning Emilia had given him not to permit any foul suspicion about Desdemona to "abuse his bosom," and the thrill which had passed through his nerves when she spoke those significant words—"If any wretch have put this in your head, let heaven requite it with the serpent's curse!"—all these were fresh in Othello's mind; they floated on the very surface of his memory, and he reviewed them and reflected, once and again. * * It seemed a strife between reason and instinct, between the powers of good and evil! Again, the doubt perplexed his mind, again his instinct warned him of a mistake, again his reason resolved his doubt. Was he going from one extreme to the other—from hatred and murder to the blindest love and faith and superstition? * * Was Cassio a villain who incriminated himself out of spite, and ruined the reputation of an innocent woman? Granted. But how could he get over the handkerchief, and why had she prevaricated about it? Oh, he dared not think of that interview of his with Desdemona! * * Was Iago a scoundrel who misrepresented everything to him, to ruin him and his good wife? But *why* did he do it, and why would he undertake the murder of Cassio who was his friend? And then, the handkerchief—oh, it almost renewed his rage to think that it had passed into the hands of a courtesan! * * Was it mere superstition which made him fancy the divine hand in a chance coincidence, the divine interference in his recall, and the divine voice in a wanton's wily oaths? * * Was the heavenly appear-

ance of his wife a downright delusion, a huge mockery? Was the angel indeed a devil that had dragged him into a most dirty and disgraceful marriage, and "ensnared his soul and body?" * * The moon hid herself in the sea, and darkness covered the earth in an instant, and the chaste stars began to twinkle purer and brighter! Was it a prelude of Nature to the events which were to follow? * * Oh, was she, after all, "a supersubtle Venetian" who had deceived him outright and was still deceiving him! And were those words of her father—

"Look to her, Moor, if thou hast eyes to see;
She has deceiv'd her father, and may thee"—

alas! were they true words and prophetic! * * Verily, "heaven mock'd itself!" Oh, the pity of it! the pity of it! Such "a fine woman," such a paragon of beauty, who "might lie by an emperor's side and command him tasks," such "an admirable musician" who could "sing the savageness out of a bear," so gentle, so lovely, so sweet, so heavenly, to prove so foul —oh, the pity of it! the pity of it! * * And what could be the cause of it? Could it be that he was "black" and had not "those soft parts of conversation that chamberers have" and was somewhat "declined into the vale of years,"—indeed, could that be the cause of her fall? Or was it the lust in her blood, the lechery of her appetite? * * Yes, Iago had spoken of the pranks of Venetian women, and said that "their best conscience" was "not to leave 't undone, but keep 't unknown." Certain, it was lust and lechery, nothing else! Oh, the pity of it—such a fine angel to be the victim of lust! the pity of it! * * And he must loathe her and leave her! He should face a stupid trial on her account, come out of it honourably, then whistle her off and fall into "chaos," and let his *quondam* wife live a free and fearless life! O God! why had he married?

"Oh, curse of marriage,
That we can call these delicate creatures ours,
And not their appetites! I had rather be a toad,
And live upon the vapour of a dungeon,
Than keep a corner in the thing I love
For others' uses."

How could Othello command patience when he reflected that he must discard the object on which he had centred his love and life, yet permit its existence "as a cistern for foul toads to knot and gender in! Oh, shame of shames! Oh, misery of miseries! His fair name and honour had already been "begrim'd" and blackened by his very marriage—he almost shuddered to utter the word—they could not become worse by his putting an end to the prostitute that had dragged him into it, and to himself. Indeed, he had staked his "life upon her faith" and now he must not hesitate to stand by it—hell and its tortures notwithstanding! Lust and lechery must not live—at least not in his name! Oh, "those charms," her eyes!—he should blot them from his mind. And oh, that "body and beauty!"—he should not expostulate with her, but kill her—even out of love—kill her and kill himself upon a kiss! Yes, that was his course —that was the course of a warrior!

Just at this moment, Cassio's cry reached the ears of the unfortunate Moor—"I am maim'd for ever. Help, ho! murther! murther!" It was a direful cry, and the voice was Cassio's—there was no doubt about it. It was clear Iago was keeping his promise. * * A few seconds, and another cry reached Othello's ears—"Oh, villain that I am!" It was Roderigo reproaching himself, but Othello thought it was Cassio, and felt so satisfied to hear that plain confession from the criminal. Yes, he was a villain and richly deserved his death. But was there not a change in the voice? Oh, yes, he was wounded and dying! * * A minute later,

a third cry reached Othello's ears—"Oh, help, ho! light! a surgeon!" Yes, sure, it *was* Cassio! And the lion flew into a terrible passion and rushed forth to tear the lamb to pieces!

[OTHELLO *at a distance.*]

"*Cas.* I am maim'd for ever. Help, ho! murther! murther! [*Falls.*
Oth. The voice of Cassio; Iago keeps his word.
Rod. Oh, villain that I am!
Oth. It is even so.
Cas. Oh, help, ho! light! a surgeon!
Oth. 'T is he.—O brave Iago, honest and just,
That hast such noble sense of thy friend's wrong!
Thou teachest me.—Minion, your dear lies dead,
And your unblest fate hies; strumpet, I come!
Forth of my heart those charms, thine eyes, are blotted;
Thy bed, lust-stain'd, shall with lust's blood be spotted." [*Exit.*

Alas the deception! With the confession of the dying criminal in his ears, and the example of brave Iago, which spurred him to his duty, it now became doubly incumbent on Othello to execute his decree on his faithless wife, without delay.

IX

Hush! the angel of innocence is sleeping! The moon came "nearer earth than was her wont," to have a last look at her lovely sister. She was this while fondly caressing her, and kissing her pale face, and has just departed with a heavy heart, unable to witness the doom which awaited the orphan child. The "chaste stars," her messengers, are vigilantly watching through the casement!

Oh, what a strange, heart-rending experiense the ill-fated wife's had been since two o' clock that afternoon! What with the loss of the strange handkerchief and the alarming account, her lord had given her, of its strange

virtues and the evil consequences of its loss; what with the unaccountable fury of her lord and the unutterable abuse he had heaped on her; what with the rude shock she had received, the heavy depression of spirits she had been thrown into, and the presentiment, which haunted her, of approaching death; what with the fear that her lord was perhaps lost to her and she was doomed to die like poor "Barbarie;" what with the pathetic thoughts about her kind father, which came into her mind, and the certain feeling that her death would shear "his old thread in twain;" what with the bitter disappointment that the "loves" she bore her lord should have earned her the reward of being "be-whored;" what with weeping and wailing and the itching of her eyes—the gentle wife was already half-dead, and her troubled soul welcomed the sleep which pressed heavily upon her. It was impossible for her to task her brain with the understanding of her lord's ill humour and behaviour. She was content to think, somewhat in the strain of Emilia, that, after all, men were men, the best of them were human and at times misjudged women quite miserably and cruelly, and her lord was no exception! Even so, her love and trust were not shaken, she found "grace and favour" in his very "stubbornness" and "checks" and "frowns," and prayed for heaven's forgiveness and the return of her lord's love and kindness. He had commanded her to dismiss her attendant and go to bed instantly, and told her he should "be returned forthwith." Emilia thought this rather suspicious and wished that her mistress had never seen her lord. Not so the trusting wife, for her love fully "approved him," and she was anxious not to displease him in the least particular: and she quickly disrobed herself and bade good night to her maid and retired. Othello had not yet spoken a kind and concil-

iatory word to her, but he was evidently in a penitent mood, and would presently return to her and, in the privacy of her chamber, explain the trouble in his mind, which had upset him so frightfully, and restore the happiness of her heart. In that firm hope and belief, she went to bed and stretched herself upon the wedding sheets, which, in a distressed moment, she had thought, might fitly form her shroud (alas the destiny!) and fell asleep. Her love and trust and innocent purity have lulled the trouble in her heart and driven all care away, and permitted a peaceful slumber, so profound that neither the entrance of her lord into her chamber nor his kisses awaken her! Alas, guileless child! alas, true and obedient wife! alas, ill-starred Desdemon!

Dagger in hand, "gnawing his nether lip," with his eyes "rolling" and sending forth a fierce look, his "very frame" shaking with the "bloody passion," the minister of Death entered into the chamber of the ill-fated wife. A solitary light shining from the wall revealed the sleeping beauty! what fascinating eyes behind those lids! what lovely lips! what balmy breath! oh, what perfect bust! what arms! what "excelling" beauty—what perfection! * * Othello's eyes were filled with tears, his soul sank within him, he put the dagger away, and stood by the peerless form he must lose for ever! * * An hour ago, when he bade Desdemona go to bed "on the instant," he had judged her pure and guiltless, and believed that her honesty was unquestionable: and he intended to return at once and speak to her kindly, tenderly, and unreservedly. But now, alas, what a change! Had he told her to dissmiss her attendant and to go to bed, only to kill her?—asleep! And was it certain she was false and faithless? * * Othello felt the weakness which was coming over him. He remembered the cry and the confession of Cassio. Oh,

there was no doubt she *was* a fallen angel: and the brave example of Iago left him no alternative. Much as he loved the sinner, it was his duty to put an end to her—not indeed out of vindictiveness, but even out of love, to save her from shame and sin, to prevent her soul from the perdition into which her lustful body was dragging it. * * He wiped the tears from his eyes, and looked once and again at the sleeping cherub, and sighed a deep, deep sigh! Oh, what lovely form! what smooth, transparent skin! what youthful blood in those veins! There was no doubt whatever about it—it was the lust in her blood that had led to her fall. Lust was the cause, lust was at the bottom, of her folly: he was ashamed to mention it to the "chaste stars."* Lust was the cause, and he must shed her lust-blood and liberate her soul. It was his sacred duty. * * * Othello's hand, however, refused to draw the dagger: he trembled to think of the blood which should scar that beautiful alabaster image. Yet, she must die! That was a foregone conclusion; and he was but a minister of Justice, executing a decree of Heaven, not a husband avenging a personal wrong. The deed he was to do was not murder, but sacrifice—a sacrifice of the victim's body to save her soul, to save the cause of purity! He had indeed allowed himself to be overpowered by rage and revenge, but now that feeling was off from his breast. He loved the wife he must lose: he grieved for her, and should strike her even because he loved her. He was doing "naught in hate, but all in honour"—nothing from any personal *animus* of revenge, because his own name and honour had been "begrim'd," but all from a larger, higher, nobler motive, in the cause of virtue and purity to prevent further taint thereof, and out of love and mercy to the sinner to save her soul:

* See note on V. ii. 1.

"It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul,—
Let me not name it to you, you chaste stars!—
It is the cause. Yet I 'll not shed her blood,
Nor scar that whiter skin of hers than snow,
And smooth as monumental alabaster.
Yet she must die, else she 'll betray more men."

Yes, her life was to be a sacrifice to humanity, that she might not lead more men into sin as she had done Cassio. But how could Othello steel himself to do the deed, with his eyes fascinated by the matchless beauty before them? He must needs put out the light and then— put out the light—extinguish her life! Oh, the misery of it! How glad he would have been to have been spared that most painful duty! But the unhappy husband had no option: there could be no retreat from his resolution and no postponement of its execution, for one part of it was already fulfilled and the other must be, to keep murder in tune. Yet, his mind was troubled that he was about to do an irrevocable deed. His heart was wrung with inexpressible grief, he was moved to tears, and he leaned over the sleeping wife and kissed her—on the lips, on the bosom, and once again and that was the last! Such sweet kisses were never "so fatal"—never doomed to be destroyed. And he wept!

"Put out the light, and then—put out the light!
If I quench thee, thou flaming minister,
I can again thy former light restore,
Should I repent me; but once put out thy light,
Thou cunning'st pattern of excelling nature,
I know not where is that Promethean heat
That can thy light relume. When I have pluck'd thy rose,
I cannot give it vital growth again,
It needs must wither; I 'll smell thee on the tree. [*Kissing her.*
Oh, balmy breath, that dost almost persuade
Justice to break her sword! One more, one more.
Be thus when thou art dead, and I will kill thee,
And love thee after. One more, and that's the last;
So sweet was ne'er so fatal. I must weep,
But they are cruel tears: this sorrow's heavenly;
It strikes where it doth love. She wakes."

Oh, the agony that he must kill the being whom he could not choose but love—that he must destroy the object on which he had centred his love and life, whose extinction necessarily meant his own! That the fairest, loveliest creature in creation should be doomed to destruction! The sweetness of her kisses almost persuaded Justice to break her sword! but he must harden his heart and carry out his resolution with calmness and courage. He should kill her—kill her even with tears in his eyes—kill her and love her! He was the instrument of Heaven—of Heavenly Justice—and his sorrow was heavenly, striking where it loved: for indeed, he would kill her not from anger and revenge, but even out of kindness, to save her from sin and shame and the scorn of the world, which should await her if he "whistled her off." And he must not tarry any longer—for delay might unnerve him for his task—no, not half an hour! And presently, the sleeping angel awoke to meet her end—and oh, what an end!

> "*Des.* Who 's there? Othello?
> *Oth.* Ay, Desdemona.
> *Des.* Will you come to bed, my lord?
> *Oth.* Have you pray'd to-night, Desdemon?
> *Des.* Ay, my lord.
> *Oth.* If you bethink yourself of any crime
> Unreconcil'd as yet to heaven and grace,
> Solicit for it straight.
> *Des.* Alack, my lord, what may you mean by that?
> *Oth.* Well, do it, and be brief; I will walk by:
> I would not kill thy unpreparèd spirit;
> No; heaven forfend! I would not kill thy soul.
> *Des.* Talk you of killing?
> *Oth.* Ay, I do.
> *Des.* Then heaven
> Have mercy on me!
> *Oth.* Amen, with all my heart!
> *Des.* If you say so, I hope you will not kill me.
> *Oth.* Humh!
> *Des.* And yet I fear you; for you 're fatal then*

* See p. 280, *ante*.

When your eyes roll so: why I should fear I know not,
Since guiltiness I know not, but yet I feel I fear.
Oth. Think on thy sins.
Des. They are loves I bear to you.
Oth. Ay, and for that thou diest.
Des. That death 's unnatural that kills for loving.
Alas, why gnaw you so your nether lip?
Some bloody passion shakes your very frame:
These are porténts; but yet I hope, I hope,
They do not point on me.
Oth. Peace, and be still!
Des. I will, so: what 's the matter?
Oth. That handkerchief which I so lov'd and gave thee
Thou gav'st to Cassio.
Des. No, by my life and soul!
Send for the man, and ask him.
Oth. Sweet soul, take heed,
Take heed of perjury; thou art on thy death-bed.
Des. Ay, but not yet to die.
Oth. Yes, presently:
Therefore confess thee freely of thy sin;
For to deny each article with oath
Cannot remove nor choke the strong conception
That I do groan withal. Thou art to die.
Des. Oh, heaven have mercy on me!
Oth. I say, amen.
Des. And have you mercy too! I never did
Offend you in my life; never lov'd Cassio
But with such general warranty of heaven
As I might love; I never gave him token.
Oth. By heaven, I saw my handkerchief in 's hand.
O perjur'd woman! thou dost stone my heart,
And makes me call what I intend to do
A murther, which I thought a sacrifice.
I saw the handkerchief.
Des. He found it then;
I never gave it him: send for him hither;
Let him confess a truth.
Oth. He hath confess'd.
Des. What, my lord?
Oth. That he hath—us'd thee.
Des. How? unlawfully?
Oth. Ay.
Des. He will not say so.
Oth. No, his mouth is stopp'd;
Honest Iago hath ta'en order for 't.
Des. Oh! my fear interprets!—what! is he dead?

Oth. Had all his hairs been lives, my great revenge
Had stomach for them all.
Des. Alas! he is betray'd, and I undone!
Oth. Out, strumpet! weep'st thou for him to my face?
Des. Oh, banish me, my lord, but kill me not!
Oth. Down, strumpet!
Des. Kill me to-morrow; let me live to-night!
Oth. Nay, if you strive,—
Des. But half an hour!
Oth. Being done, there is no pause.
Des. But while I say one prayer!
Oth. It is too late." [*Smothers her.*

So settled was his conclusion about her guilt, and so great his fear that any expostulation with her might "unprovide" his mind, that, directly Desdemona awoke, the resolute husband proceeded to his task, with a calmness which was almost freezing; yet, out of love and mercy to the victim that was doomed to die, he addressed her most endearingly, and told her, touchingly and solemnly, to pray and confess her sins to heaven, so he might not kill her soul with her body. How heart-rending this to the poor wife who had gone to sleep over a troubled soul, in hopeful expectation of her lord's returning and speaking to her with his wonted kindness and love! What a death-blow to the gentle soul who awoke from sleep and was glad to find that her lord was come, and, forgetting the past, affectionately invited him to bed! She could scarcely believe she was not dreaming when he talked of "killing" her, yet of not killing her "unpreparèd spirit:" and her quivering lips could only utter a short prayer to heaven to have mercy on her. The blundering husband, however, could only find fuel for his wrath, in the fright and trembling of the innocent wife, and he shook with passion and assumed a murderous aspect. His eyes "rolled" and he "gnawed his nether lip," so, the timid creature suspected a deadly intent and feared to look him in the

face. It was unnatural to "kill for loving" and she hoped her lord was not going to kill her, for she knew no "guiltiness" nor any sins but the "loves she bore him." Was it possible for Othello to believe this of her? and could anything remove "the strong conception" of her guilt the Moor groaned withal?" The handkerchief, his gift to her, he had seen in the hands of Cassio: and no doubt, she had given it him. She might deny it on oath, she might beg (she could scarcely challenge) him to send for the man and ask him, but the loving husband could only pity the obduracy of his wife and warn her, touchingly, of the sin of perjury:

"Sweet soul, take heed,
Take heed of perjury; thou art on thy death-bed."

And he could only repeat his stern sentence upon her—"Thou art to die." She might pray for heaven's mercy and his too; she might assure him that she "*never* did offend him" in her life, "*never* lov'd Cassio but with such general warranty of heaven" as she might love, "*never* gave him token," *never* gave him the handkerchief; she might even suggest that he must have "found it," and beseech her lord once again to send for him and "let him confess a truth;" she might weep and plead her innocence like a very child—what could it all avail? It was downright hard perjury which only served to stone Othello's heart, drove him into rage, and made him feel he was going to do "a murther," not "a sacrifice." Alas the hoodwinked husband who could neither perceive the innocence of his wife nor believe her oath on her very death-bed! Alas the ill-fated wife who, even with death before her, could not cast off her gentleness and timidity, who could command neither words to assert her innocence nor indignation to protect her! And the evil fate which had created

a dying confession of Cassio for Othello's ears now supplied a confession from his wife, both in speech and behaviour!

"Send for him hither; let him confess a truth."—"He hath confessed that he hath—us'd thee (unlawfully)"—"He will not say so."

"What supreme confidence in the paramour!" thought Othello. *He will not say so!* But he *had* said so, and his mouth was stopped—he was killed by honest Iago, under the orders of the general!

Desdemona knew that Cassio was too good a man to confess a lie against her, and grieved to learn he had been killed, for it was clear he had become the victim of a false and foul accusation: and she wept that he was no longer available to bear witness to her innocence.

"Alas! he is betray'd, and I undone."

Othello felt thankful for this involuntary confession of her guilt, which fell from the lips of his wife. Yes, an honest man had revealed to him the secret intimacy between her and Cassio, and she was indeed undone!

The trial was over! The criminal pronounced her doom with her own lips! and the infuriate husband pounced upon her and proceeded to smother her. Oh, the harrowing spectacle! The helpless wife, all love and sweetness, begged in vain for banishment, that so her innocence might become clear at some future time: but the minister of Death was determined to execute his decree at once. She pleaded like a child for a night's respite, but the cruel executioner was inexorable. Did the poor soul strive to resist? Her "kind lord" had only to touch his dagger, and the meek creature surrendered herself completely to his will! Obedient even in death, the loving wife again begged (doubtless for her lord's sake) for a half-hour's life, for a few moments' breath but while she said *one* prayer—but oh,

the cruelty! once begun there could be no pause, and it was too late! Oh, the feeble groans! Oh, the holy resignation! Weep, gentle reader! weep for the death of the divine creature dumb, who shall evermore be known as DESDEMON! Too truly is the soul wrung so, "all for pity we could die!"

The cruel deed being done, the Moor stood aghast at his own brutality! He had killed a meek, defenceless woman and shown himself a heartless barbarian! Cassio was killed, and people were rushing to the scene of murder—"the noise was high" in the street. Desdemona, too, was dead! her groans had ceased! He could not revoke the deeds! neither would he recede. What was next to be done? Well!—he should follow suit! Iago would no doubt explain the deeds: but had he not better do it himself? * * What noise was that? Was it a rap at the door? did any one call to tell him about the murder of Cassio?—it was a low, indistinct voice. * * Othello turned towards the door, and again towards his wife. She was lingering still—a very slight motion in her body and a hard, painful gasping! She was dying—not yet quite dead! It was cruelty to let her linger in her pain. He had no doubt thought of not shedding her blood, and abstained from drawing his dagger, but now, even out of mercy, he must use it to hasten her death, for it would be brutal to repeat the smothering. Besides, some one was evidently calling, and he should make sure of her death before he opened the door. And he took out his dagger and stabbed the dying wife in the chest—"so, so *"—and oh, witnessed the bleeding from "that whiter skin of hers than snow," even to the confusion of his own eyes! There was no more uncertainty about her death, and the desolate husband broke out into a heart-rending lament!

* See note on V. ii. 88

EMILIA *at the door.*

"*Emil.* My lord, my lord! what, ho! my lord, my lord!
Oth. What noise is this?—Not dead? not yet quite dead?
I that am cruel am yet merciful;
I would not have thee linger in thy pain.—
So, so.
Emil. [*Within*] What, ho! my lord, my lord!
Oth Who 's there?
Emil. [*Within*] Oh, good my lord, I would speak a word with you!
Oth. Yes;—'t is Emilia.—By and by.—She 's dead.—
'T is like she comes to speak of Cassio's death:
The noise was high.—Ha! no more moving?
Still as the grave.—Shall she come in? were 't good?
I think she stirs again: no. What 's best to do?
If she come in, she 'll sure speak to my wife.
My wife! my wife! what wife? I have no wife.
Oh, insupportable! Oh, heavy hour!
Methinks it should be now a huge eclipse
Of sun and moon, and that the affrighted globe
Should yawn at alteration."

The loviest creature in the world, the most charming of women, was no more! He had destroyed her—true, "upon just grounds"—but his instinct still informed him he had put an end to the holiest and most heavenly of human beings, "the sweetest innocent that e'er did lift up eye:" and he felt as though it was the time of a huge eclipse of sun and moon and an awful alteration of the world! He had lived in a dream of paradise for a short month (it looked as if it had covered a whole life) and now he awoke from it into a most dreadful chaos, an all-devouring darkness and blankness! Oh, if she had been true, he would not have exchanged her for "such another world of one entire and perfect chrysolite." But now to him, the world had come to an end! Oh, the fatal delusion! oh, the irreparable loss! oh, insupportable! oh, heavy hour! And the great child wept and sobbed!

X

Othello had forgotten the call at the door, and it was renewed from another quarter. Emilia, growing suspicious at the delay, had moved to the window, to catch a glimpse of the inside, and called from there: so, Othello did not find her at the door when he presently opened it, having drawn the curtains down, and replaced the dagger under his dress.

> " *Emil.* [*Within*] I do beseech you
> That I may speak with you, oh, good my lord!
> *Oth.* I had forgot thee. Oh, come in, Emilia.—
> Soft; by and by.—Let me the curtains draw.— [*Unlocks the door.*
> Where art thou?
>
> *Enter* EMILIA.
>
> What 's the matter with thee now?
> *Emil.* Oh, my good lord, yonder 's foul murthers done!
> *Oth.* What, now?
> *Emil.* But now, my lord.
> *Oth.* It is the very error of the moon;
> She comes more nearer earth than she was wont,
> And makes men mad.
> *Emil.* Cassio, my lord, hath kill'd a young Venetian
> Call'd Roderigo.
> *Oth.* Roderigo kill'd!
> And Cassio kill'd!
> *Emil.* No, Cassio is not kill'd.
> *Oth.* Not Cassio kill'd! then murther 's out of tune,
> And sweet revenge grows harsh.
> *Des.* Oh, falsely, falsely murder'd!
> *Emil.* Alas, what cry is that?
> *Oth.* That? what?
> *Emil.* Out, and alas! that was my lady's voice.—
> Help! help, ho! help!—Oh, lady, speak again!
> Sweet Desdemona! Oh, sweet mistress, speak!
> *Des.* A guiltless death I die.
> *Emil.* Oh, who hath done this deed?
> *Des.* Nobody: I myself. Farewell!
> Commend me to my kind lord; oh, farewell!" [*Dies.*

The Christian began to assert himself, and, in spite of

his firm conviction of the guilt of both the victims, Othello perceived that the murder he had ordered and that he had himself perpetrated were only worthy of a mad savage: and he prepared Emilia for "fouler" news than what she had brought.

> "It is the very error of the moon;
> She comes more nearer earth than she was wont,
> And makes men mad."

He had not however expected that his grief would so soon grow a thousandfold by virtue of strange, undeceiving news. Roderigo was killed and Cassio was not killed! Oh, that Emilia had come with the news a little earlier! Oh, the bitter agony of the Moor (not that Cassio was not killed but) that Desdemona was already deprived of her life! Alas, alas! why had he been in such hot haste—to be mocked and galled by the very success of his cruel deed!

Othello kept Emilia outside the door and was talking to her in a low voice. Desdemona, revived to consciousness by the bleeding (which removed the pulmonary congestion due to smothering), muttered a last assertion of her innocence: "Oh, falsely, falsely murdered!" —and presently again, "A guiltless death I die." She could not pass away, leaving her honour tainted and tarnished with her lord's suspicion. She thought he was near her, and told him, even in her death, that indeed she was innocent and had been made the victim of a false accusation. Emilia was startled to hear the feeble groan of her mistress, and rushed in, pushing Othello aside from the doorway: "Out, and alas! that was my lady's voice." She approached the bed and raised the curtains—alas! to see a most horrible sight, to find her beloved mistress bleeding and dying! Tears filled her eyes, and she screamed out for help, and cried, "Oh, who hath done this deed?" And the lifeless lips

of the dying mistress gasped out a glorious exculpation of her lord—those sublime words, never to be forgotten —and grew for ever silent!

> "Nobody: I myself. Farewell!
> Commend me to my kind lord; oh, farewell!"

What a touching farewell, at once to her lord and her maid and the world! What a melancholy pleasure it should be for the loving daughter to find her father before her in that unknown land whither she was flying! and what a strange meeting it should be when her lord presently joins them! There can be no differences—nothing but love, pure and perfect—in that higher life; but even there, Desdemona should be an angel of angels, for the sweet, unending love, she had shown in her earthly life, in her suffering, and in her very death! She knew what remorse and misery should overwhelm her lord when he came to find out his mistake, and had begged (even for his sake) for a few moments' respite to prove her innocence. But he was deaf to her prayers, and now she was dying, she could only pity him for his rashness, and seek to save him from the consequences of his deed.

> "Nobody: I myself. Farewell!
> Commend me to my kind lord; oh, farewell!"

What heavenly forgiveness! what unswerving loyalty to her lord! what unshakable, unalterable love, even while dying by his hand! We almost forget the suffering of the gentle being in the sweet vision, we are granted, of her beautiful soul! and the heart, ready to burst with pain and pathos, is filled with love and admiration for the fairy angel who has for aye exalted the glory of her sex. And she departed this life, all love, all pity for her lord, with her trust in Emilia, in Cassio, even in Iago, undiminished, without any knowledge of evil, grieved that her deluded lord had employed the "good friend" for

a bad deed, and not without a prayer for the "eternal villain" who had "devised the slander" against her and Cassio and brought about their undeserved deaths! O divine Desdemona!

> "Nobody: I myself. Farewell!
> Commend me to my kind lord; oh, farewell!"

Emilia stood bewildered at this strange confession. Did the poor lady, disgusted with her lord's unkindness and abuse, put an end to herself? and was it for that purpose she had dismissed her in such a hurry? and oh, was it with the death before her she had sung that touching song? The simple maid was well-nigh frightened when Othello seemed to challenge her to explain the awful deed, almost as if he meant to charge her as an accomplice: but she recovered her courage at his very next words, and poured forth her grief in a most unrestrained abuse of the cruel husband.

> "*Oth.* Why, how should she be murder'd?
> *Emil.* Alas, who knows?
> *Oth.* You heard her say herself, it was not I.
> *Emil.* She said so; I must needs report the truth.
> *Oth.* She 's like a liar gone to burning hell;
> 'T was I that kill'd her.
> *Emil.* Oh, the more angel she, and you the blacker devil!
> *Oth.* She turn'd to folly, and she was a whore.
> *Emil.* Thou dost belie her, and thou art a devil.
> *Oth.* She was false as water.
> *Emil.* Thou art rash as fire, to say
> That she was false; Oh, she was heavenly true!
> *Oth.* Cassio did top her: ask thy husband else.
> Oh, I were damn'd beneath all depth in hell,
> But that I did proceed upon just grounds
> To this extremity. Thy husband knew it all.
> *Emil.* My husband!
> *Oth.* Thy husband.
> *Emil.* That she was false to wedlock?
> *Oth.* Ay, with Cassio:
> Had she been true,
> If heaven would make me such another world
> Of one entire and perfect chrysolite

I 'd not have sold her for 't.
Emil. My husband!
Oth. Ay,
'T was he that told me on her first;
An honest man he is, and hates the slime
That sticks on filthy deeds.
Emil. My husband!
Oth. What needs this iterance, woman? I say thy husband.
Emil. Oh, mistress, villany hath made mocks with love!—
My husband say that she was false!
Oth. He, woman;
I say thy husband: dost understand the word?
My friend, thy husband, honest, honest Iago.
Emil. If he say so, may his pernicious soul
Rot half a grain a day! he lies to the heart;
She was too fond of her most filthy bargain.
Oth. Ha!
Emil. Do thy worst;
This deed of thine is no more worthy heaven
Than thou wast worthy her.
Oth. Peace! you were best.
Emil. Thou hast not half that power to do me harm
As I have to be hurt. Oh, gull! oh, dolt!
As ignorant as dirt! thou hast done a deed,
(I care not for thy sword) I 'll make thee known
Though I lost twenty lives.—Help! help, ho! help!
The Moor hath kill'd my mistress! Murther! murther!"

Othello spoke in the strong confidence that, though he had done a brutal deed, he had not proceeded to it without "just grounds." In his perverted judgment, the angelic falsehood of his wife, incriminating herself, was but a dying "prank" of a supersubtle Venetian, calculated to unsettle the most conclusive conviction. He pitied her and despised her for the death-bed lie, and spurned the shelter it afforded him, and calmly yet proudly confessed his deed to Emilia, and cited the testimony of her husband to the victim's guilt. And not all the astonishment of Emilia, nor all her repeated exclamations, refusing to believe that her husband had slandered her mistress and led to her death, nor even the strong imprecation she pronounced on him

that "his pernicious soul might rot half a grain a day," if indeed he had done it—no, nothing could open the eyes of the Moor to the huge deception and delusion which had launched him in a horrible crime: such was the chaos and confusion he had been thrown into by the hellish arts of an "eternal villain!" Blame not the Moor, dear reader, for this utter imperviousness to all moral influence. Rather, curse the cruel fate which had hopelessly ensnared him in the toils of a hellish fiend, distorted his vision, and compelled him to misinterpret the dying words of his wife—her heavenly forgiveness—as the cunningest "prank" of an obdurate prostitute! Pity him—oh, pity him—and believe that no husband, whatever his intellectual capacity, could have escaped the obliquity, the utter chaos and confusion which had been produced by the deady blow-upon-blow, dealt so adroitly, and with scarcely any interval between, by an "honest" friend—"honest" in everbody's opinion!—and consummated by the confessions which freshly confirmed to Othello's mind "the strong conception" of his wife's guilt that he "groaned withal." Yes, measure the misery and chaos in Othello's mind by the shocking obtusity and obliquity he discovered, and pity the noble soul that was "wrought" and perplexed in the extreme." One need scarcely wonder at Othello's words—"She's like a liar gone to burning hell"—or at his resenting the foul abuse of Emilia—

"She was too fond of her most filthy bargain"—

and threatening to draw his sword if she did not put a stop to her railing. He had indeed become a "gull," a "dolt,": but, conscious that he had done "all in honour," he was not ashamed or afraid of a public avowal of his deed, and welcomed the cries of Emilia which presently summoned Gratiano and others to the spot.

XI

Gratiano and Lodovico had followed Cassio to his lodging: Iago had just brought the surgeon, and Montano, too, had arrived there, having heard of the mishap, when the alarming news was brought that the Moor had murdered his wife. Gratiano trembled when he heard the news, and ejaculated in a tone of utmost surprise and grief—"Oh, monstrous! oh, heavens forfend!"

"I suspected his wits were not safe," said Lodovico; "indeed, I thought he was light of brain."

"I had my own fears about him," added Iago, "though I never dreamt his own wife was to become a victim to his mood. But come, gentlemen, let us run to the castle. Hope the news is false or magnified. Signior Lodovico will stop here and see to the dressing of the wound. Come, masters! Let us to the castle." And they proceeded thither immediately.

For the infinite pains he had taken to mature a most elaborate plan to injure others, Iago had received an altogether unexpected return, for within the last half-an-hour he found that his own life was in danger, and unless luck came to his aid (and it had helped him so materially that day), and Othello and Desdemona were both off this world, he should soon find it impossible to save himself. The scheme against Cassio's life had failed—Iago had never expected this—and the man who was to have been a corpse was now Governor of the Island! (Lodovico and Gratiano had just delivered the Commission to him.) It was some consolation, thought the villain, that Roderigo's mouth was shut for ever, and he rejoiced that luck was again changing in his favour when he learnt the welcome tidings of Desdemona's death. One more favourable turn, and he could rely

on his wits to escape from the dangerous mire he had got into. But before this favourable turn occurred, the devil was to be unmasked and thrown into utter confusion by revelations from a quarter where he had never dreamt of danger—his own obedient wife, Emilia—and even the lips of the dead Roderigo were to speak, and the contents of his pockets to supply the most compromising and damning evidence, against him!

Enter MONTANO, GRATIANO, IAGO, *and others.*

"*Mon.* What is the matter?—How now, general!
Emil. Oh, are you come, Iago? you have done well,
That men must lay their murthers on your neck.
Gra. What is the matter?
Emil. Disprove this villain, if thou be'st a man:
He says thou told'st him that his wife was false:
I know thou didst not, thou'rt not such a villain.
Speak, for my heart is full.
Iago. I told him what I thought, and told no more
Than what he found himself was apt and true.
Emil. But did you ever tell him she was false?
Iago. I did.
Emil. You told a lie, an odious, damnèd lie;
Upon my soul, a lie, a wicked lie!
She false with Cassio!—did you say with Cassio?
Iago. With Cassio, mistress. Go to, charm your tongue.
Emil. I will not charm my tongue; I am bound to speak:
My mistress here lies murder'd in her bed,—
All. Oh, heavens forfend!
Emil. And your reports have set the murther on.
Oth. Nay, stare not, masters; it is true, indeed.
Gra. 'T is a strange truth.
Mon. Oh, monstrous act!
Emil. Villany, villany, villany!
I think upon 't,—I think I smell 't;—oh, villany!—
I thought so then!—I 'll kill myself for grief.—
Oh, villany, villany!
Iago. What, are you mad? I charge you, get you home.
Emil. Good gentlemen, let me have leave to speak;
'T is proper I obey him, but not now.
Perchance, Iago, I will ne'er go home.
Oth. Oh! oh! oh, [*He falls on the bed.*
Emil. Nay, lay thee down and roar;
For thou hast kill'd the sweetest innocent

That e'er did lift up eye.
Oth. [*Rising*] Oh, she was foul!—
I scarce did know you, uncle; there lies your niece,
Whose breath, indeed, these hands have newly stopp'd.
I know this act shows horrible and grim.
Gra. Poor Desdemon! I am glad thy father 's dead.
Thy match was mortal to him, and pure grief
Shore his old thread in twain. Did he live now,
This sight would make him do a desperate turn,
Yea, curse his better angel from his side,
And fall to reprobance.
Oth. 'T is pitiful; but yet Iago knows
That she with Cassio hath the act of shame
A thousand times committed; Cassio confess'd it:
And she did gratify his amorous works
With that recognizance and pledge of love
Which I first gave her. I saw it in his hand;
It was a handkerchief; an antique token
My father gave my mother.
Emil. Oh, heaven! oh, heavenly powers!
Iago. Come, hold your peace.
Emil. 'T will out, 't will out—I peace!
No, I will speak as liberal as the north;
Let heaven and men and devils, let them all,
All, all, cry shame against me, yet I 'll speak.
Iago. Be wise, and get you home.
Emil. I will not.
[*Iago offers to stab Emilia.*
Gra. Fie!
Your sword upon a woman?
Emil. Oh, thou dull Moor! that handkerchief thou speak'st of
I found by fortune and did give my husband;
For often, with a solemn earnestness,
(More than indeed belong'd to such a trifle)
He begg'd of me to steal it.
Iago. Villanous whore!
Emil. She give it Cassio! no, alas! I found it,
And I did give 't my husband.
Iago. Filth, thou liest!
Emil. By heaven, I do not, I do not, gentlemen.
Oh, murd'rous coxcomb! what should such a fool
Do with so good a wife?
Oth. Are there no stones in heaven
But what serve for the thunder?—Precious villain! [*He runs at Iago; Iago stabs Emil. & runs out. Mon. disarms Oth.*
Gra. The woman falls; sure, he hath kill'd his wife.
Emil. Ay, ay. Oh, lay me by my mistress' side.

Gra. He 's gone, but his wife 's kill'd.
Mon. 'T is a notorious villain. Take you this weapon,
Which I have here recover'd from the Moor.
Come, guard the door without: let him not pass,
But kill him rather. I 'll after that same villain,
For 't is a damnèd slave. [*Exeunt Mon. and Gra.*
Oth. I am not valiant neither,
But every puny whipster gets my sword.
But why should honour outlive honesty?
Let it go all.
Emil. What did thy song bode, lady?
Hark, canst thou hear me? I will play the swan,
And die in music. *Willow, willow, willow.*—
Moor, she was chaste; she loved thee, cruel Moor;
So come my soul to bliss, as I speak true:
So speaking—as I think—I die—I die." [*Dies.*

During the short interval which elapsed before Montano and others poured in, Emilia's mind was mortified with the utmost grief and distress and doubt: for, much as she could not believe that her husband had told the Moor that his wife was false (he had always praised her virtues), she was sore perplexed by the repeated assurances that were given about it. Was the Moor raving and trying to lay his murder on another's shoulders, or was Iago indeed an "eternal villain," who had "devised the slander" against the good lady? Emilia knew that her husband was not quite so honest and and good as people thought, but she could not believe he was "such a villain." She had not been without suspicion anent his endless solicitation for the handkerchief, and had feared it might be for some evil purpose when she gave it him at noon, and would never have given it but for the compromising situation in which she was caught; and it was significant, too, that the Moor's angry mood and unkindness to his wife began almost within two hours thereafter. But the simple woman could not see any link between the handkerchief and the charge of infidelity with Cassio, on which her

mistress lay murdered, and she hoped her fear was altogether imaginary and that her husband was innocent of all blame. And directly Iago came, she asked him, in the fulness of her anxiety and excitement, forthwith to clear himself of the crime the Moor laid "on his neck." What was her surprise when her husband brazened it out and coolly admitted having told the Moor of his wife's infidelity, and asserted it was true, and commanded her to "charm her tongue!" How could she help saying to his face that he had told a lie—"an odious, damnèd, wicked lie"—and how could she charm her tongue when her beloved mistress lay "murder'd in her bed" and her husband's false and wicked reports had "set the murther on?" She now felt certain that the handkerchief she had given him at noon *was* used—she could not guess how—to damn her mistress, and she would speak it out and kill herself for her folly. No! she could not charm her tongue, nor obey her husband under the circumstances, nor go home. Her husband!—and what a husband! He was a villain who had "lied to the heart" and "his pernicious soul" deserved to "rot half a grain a day!" How could she think of going home, or living with him any longer, or living at all, when, through her stupidity and folly, she had brought about the death of the angel whom she had so long loved as a sister! And why should she live? and how could she bear her grief? Oh, she must kill herself! * * And she no longer cursed the Moor but pitied him for his dulness and rashness: and when, overpowered with the shame of his horrible deed, and the utter chaos before him, he fell on the bed and began to weep aloud, she could only commiserate him and tell him in a strain of bitterest pathos:

"Nay, lay thee down and roar;
For thou hast kill'd the sweetest innocent
That e'er did lift up eye."

Othello, however, was still under delusion, and believed he had murdered his wife "upon just grounds," though his act "showed horrible and grim:" but the justification, he presently gave of his deed, led to his instant disillusionment and the exposure of Iago's villany; for the Moor's mere mention of the handkerchief he had seen in Cassio's hand revealed the whole truth to Emilia and she burst out into a most woful cry—

"Oh, heaven! oh, heavenly powers!"—

and could not rest until she spoke out everything. O God! she *was* responsible for the death of her good mistress! Alas her stupidity! she must speak it out and kill herself. No command nor threat of Iago could stop her mouth. The only way to silence her was to stab her, but this Iago could not do until it was too late. And she spoke "as liberal as the north" and told the tale of the fateful handkerchief she had found by accident and given to her husband, and cursed and cried shame against herself for the foolish part she had played.

It was a sudden awakening to Othello from his terrible dream. Emilia had said enough to exonerate her innocent mistress. Iago had often begged his wife to steal the handkerchief and received it from her! That was enough to stamp him a most atrocious villain. Othello cared not to know how the handkerchief had passed into Cassio's hands nor wherefore the villain had so "ensnar'd his soul and body." His eyes were opened to the huge, irreparable blunder he had perpetrated, his soul was filled with the most excruciating remorse, and he prayed heaven for his instantaneous destruction—for a special thunderbolt to strike him dead,* as a punishment for his rash and inhuman act, rash and inhuman even under the influence of the vilest villany. "What should such a fool do with so good a

* See note on V. ii. 233-4

wife?" Yes, she was too good a wife for a fool like him, who could not understand her noble and virtuous character, who suspected her, and alas, murdered her! Indeed, he was a "murd'rous coxcomb," and had deprived himself of a most innocent, a most virtuous and loving wife. And he could not bear the sight of the "precious villain" who had plotted against the life of the sweetest and holiest of women; and he flew at him with his sword. It was Iago's opportunity to destroy the evidence against him, and, in the confusion which ensued, he stabbed Emilia from behind and took to his heels! Montano "recovered the sword" from Othello's hand and gave it to Gratiano and set him to "guard the door without;" and, being young and swift of foot, himself ran in pursuit of the "damnèd slave."*

Emilia's end was touching in the extreme. Like her mistress whose dying thought was of her lord whom she loved to the last, the devoted maid, at the moment of her death, thought only of her mistress whom she loved—but alas! whom she had wronged even without meaning any harm. She felt thankful to her husband for his kindest cut of all—the stabbing—and the only desire of her heart was that she should be laid by her mistress's side, so she might be with her in death as in life! "Oh, lay me by my mistress' side." And there, swan-like, she could sing the dirge she had heard but two hours since, and fly away to the angel that was gone before, and leave a last, pitiful, heart-rending, yet welcome word to the unfortunate Moor!

> "Moor, she was chaste; she loved thee, cruel Moor;
> So come my soul to bliss, as I speak true."

It is impossible not to forgive the good maid for the fault by which she had brought about the great calamity —she has expiated it even with her life! And her

* See note on V. ii. 241.

unflinching devotion to her mistress, her unhesitating assertion of the chastity of the sweet innocent, her unsparing invectives against the Moor and her husband, her courage in speaking out at the risk of her life, her readiness to die for grief, her death so sublime, her dying song, and dying words so piercingly pathetic—all awaken love and pity in our hearts, at once for the mistress and the maid, and permit us to breathe despite the depressing agony and horror of the spectacle. O dear Emilia!

XII

The dying words of Emilia pierced deep into Othello's soul, and he felt as if his life was ebbing away! What a foul crime he had rashly committed against his wife who was "heavenly true" and pure! and how often since evening he had persuaded himself and resolved not to entertain any thought of murder! But alas the fate! who could control it? He had lost all his good name for "honesty" and just conduct, and lost his valour, too; for he had allowed his sword to be plucked away from his hand and was a prisoner in that room! Indeed, how could he help it or resist it—he who had become a criminal of criminals, a murderer! It only remained for him to explain his horrible deed and to execute the sentence upon himself. And he took the "sword of Spain" which he found in the chamber, and called to Gratiano to unlock the door and let him out: but the guard would not, and the prisoner was content to speak to him at the window.

> "*Oth.* I have another weapon in this chamber;
> It is a sword of Spain, the ice-brook's temper.—
> Oh, here it is.—Uncle, I must come forth.
> *Gra.* [*Within*] If thou attempt it, it will cost thee dear;
> Thou hast no weapon, and perforce must suffer.
> *Oth.* Look in upon me then, and speak with me,
> Or, naked as I am, I will assault thee.

Re-enter GRATIANO.

Gra. What is the matter?
Oth. Behold, I have a weapon;
A better never did itself sustain
Upon a soldier's thigh: I have seen the day,
That with this little arm and this good sword
I have made my way through more impediments
Than twenty times your stop.—But (oh, vain boast!)
Who can control his fate? 't is not so now.—
Be not afraid, though you do see me weapon'd;
Here is my journey's end, here is my butt,
And very sea-mark of my utmost sail.
Do you go back dismay'd? 'T is a lost fear:
Man but a rush against Othello's breast,
And he retires.—Where should Othello go?"

He could scarcely speak—he was choked with grief and agony. The mighty warrior had become a criminal and prisoner, and his career had drawn to a close. He had reached his "journey's end" and might go no further. Indeed, where should he go? where should he go but follow the wife whom he had killed? And he turned round and approached the bed to look at the "ill-starr'd wench," and burst out into a most piteous and desperate lament:

"Where should Othello go?
Now, how dost thou look now? Oh, ill-starr'd wench!
Pale as thy smock! when we shall meet at compt,
This look of thine will hurl my soul from heaven,
And fiends will snatch at it. Cold, cold, my girl!
Even like thy chastity.
Oh, cursèd, cursèd slave! Whip me, ye devils,
From the possession of this heavenly sight!
Blow me about in winds! roast me in sulphur!
Wash me in steep-down gulfs of liquid fire!
O Desdemon! dead Desdemon! dead! oh! oh!"

He had deprived himself of the privilege of looking at such a heavenly sight; "fall'n in the practice" of a "curséd, curséd slave,"* he had damned himself "beneath all depth in hell;" and he deserved to and must

* See note on V. ii. 276

endure all the horrible punishments of hell! Oh, the dreadful remorse of the noble soul! Oh, the writhing agony!

XIII

Were it possible to pity a villain whose villany had wrought horrible deeds and turned in the end against its author, Iago was now in a most pitiable and helpless situation. Simple as his scheme of mischief was in its inception, it had quickly assumed huge proportions and necessitated a most careful and skilful manœuvring, and he had proved equal to the need: and luck, too, had helped him materially. But he was by no means all-wise or omniscient: he had not understood the character of his own wife! With all his knowledge of human life, he had never thought it possible that, under any circumstances, the simple woman, who loved him and obeyed him and did so many things to please him, could cast him off and damn him to destruction, and welcome her own end! A stranger to unselfish love, to good feeling and all moral impulse, it had never occurred to him that Emilia's love and devotion to her mistress and her grief for her death might drive her "mad" to the extent of betraying him and bringing ruin upon him and herself. And the man who considered everybody else a fool had blundered like the biggest of fools! and all his infinite acuteness did not avail against the moral impulse and honest indignation of a common-place woman! He could not stop her mouth, and she revealed the truth about the handkerchief and threw him into utter confusion. Even if Othello put an end to himself (and Iago still expected that consummation), there was scarcely any way of escape for him, and he was almost at the end of his resources. Withal, he would not abandon hope, and he stabbed his wife (not

from rage or spite, but purely to guard his own position) and ran away to Cassio's lodging.

"By God! the Moor has turned mad!" he cried breathlessly, "he 's murdering everybody! He flew at me with his sword, and, thanks to my star, I've had a hairbreadth 'scape!"

"What is this, Iago!" asked Lodovico, in surprise, showing him the letter he had written: "Did you set Roderigo on to murder Cassio?"

"Yes," readily replied the villain, "at the instance and under the command of the general. It is a long tale——"

But before he began the tale, Montano came in, with a loud cry—"Arrest the knave! He is a damned villain."

"What's the matter?" asked Lodovico.

"He has killed his wife. He is a most accursed rogue!" replied Montano.

"Killed my wife!" shrieked Iago in a tone of utmost grief; "killed my wife! oh! oh! . . . ."

"She has revealed all his villany," continued Montano: "she confessed she had given him the handkerchief with which he deluded the Moor. The poor man believed his wife was guilty with Cassio, and murdered her."

"Oh, monstrous! monstrous!" cried Lodovico.

"Oh, me! the handkerchief I found in my chamber!" ejaculated Cassio.

"Yes," confessed Iago, in the midst of his wail, "The same handkerchief. I dropt it in your chamber for a special purpose, and it has wrought to my desire. But oh, unjust world! I must suffer for it—even for it! oh, Emilia, Emilia, oh, oh, oh! . . . ."

"Arrest the wretch," repeated Montano, "and let us conduct him to the castle where his bloody work speaks against him." And the next moment, he was a prisoner.

Why did Iago volunteer the confession about the handkerchief, and what was the " special purpose which wrought to his desire?" Was his the confession of a convicted criminal, or was it a last effort of the devil to save himself? We shall see later on.

XIV

Enter LODOVICO, CASSIO *carried in a chair*, MONTANO, *and* Officers *with* IAGO, *prisoner*.

"*Lod*. Where is this rash and most unfortunate man?
Oth. That 's he that was Othello; here I am.
Lod. Where is that viper? bring the villain forth.
Oth. I look down towards his feet; but that 's a fable.
If that thou be'st a devil, I cannot kill thee. [*Wounds Iago*.
Lod. Wrench his sword from him.
Iago. I bleed, sir, but not kill'd.
Oth. I am not sorry neither: I 'd have thee live;
For, in my sense, 't is happiness to die.
Lod. Oh, thou Othello, that wast once so good
Fall'n in the practice of a cursèd slave,
What shall be said to thee?
Oth. Why, any thing:
An honourable murderer, if you will;
For naught I did in hate, but all in honour,
Lod. This wretch hath part confess'd his villany.
Did you and he consent in Cassio's death?
Oth. Ay.
Cas. Dear general, I never gave you cause.
Oth. I do believe it, and ask your pardon.
Will you, I pray, demand that demi-devil
Why he hath thus ensnar'd my soul and body?
Iago. Demand me nothing: what you know, you know;
From this time forth I never will speak word.
Lod. What, not to pray?
Gra. Torments will ope your lips.
Oth. Well, thou dost best.
Lod. Sir, you shall understand what hath befall'n,
(Which, as I think, you know not). Here is a letter
Found in the pocket of the slain Roderigo,
And here another; the one of them imports
The death of Cassio to be undertook
By Roderigo.
Oth. Oh, villain!

Cas. Most heathenish and most gross!
Lod. Now here 's another discontented paper,
Found in his pocket too; and this, it seems,
Roderigo meant to have sent this damnèd villain,
But that, belike, Iago in the interim
Came in and satisfied him.
Oth. Oh, thou pernicious caitiff!—
How came you, Cassio, by that handkerchief
That was my wife's?
Cas. I found it in my chamber;
And he himself confess'd but even now
That there he dropt it for a special purpose
Which wrought to his desire.
Oth. Oh, fool! fool! fool!
Cas. There is besides in Roderigo's letter,
How he upbraids Iago that he made him
Brave me upon the watch; whereon it came
That I was cast: and even but now he spake,
(After long seeming dead) Iago hurt him,
Iago set him on.
Lod. You must forsake this room, and go with us:
Your power and your command is taken off,
And Cassio rules in Cyprus. For this slave,
If there be any cunning cruelty
That can torment him much and hold him long,
It shall be his. You shall close prisoner rest,
Till that the nature of your fault be known
To the Venetian state.—Come, bring him away.
Oth. Soft you; a word or two before you go.
I have done the state some service, and they know 't.
No more of that.—I pray you, in your letters,
When you shall these unlucky deeds relate,
Speak of me as I am; nothing extenuate,
Nor set down aught in malice. Then must you speak
Of one that loved not wisely but too well;
Of one not easily jealous, but being wrought
Perplex'd in the extreme; of one whose hand
(Like the base Júdean) threw a pearl away
Richer than all his tribe; of one whose subdued eyes,
Albeit unused to the melting mood,
Drop tears as fast as the Arabian trees
Their med'cinable gum. Set you down this;
And say besides, that in Aleppo once,
Where a malignant and turban'd Turk
Beat a Venetian and traduc'd the state,
I took by the throat the circumcised dog
And smote him—thus. [*Stabs himself.*

Lod. Oh, bloody period!
Gra. All that 's spoke is marr'd.
Oth. I kiss'd thee ere I kill'd thee: no way but this,
Killing myself, to die upon a kiss. [*Falls on the bed, and dies.*
Cas. This did I fear, but thought he had no weapon;
For he was great of heart.
Lod. [*To Iago*] O Spartan dog
More fell than anguish, hunger, or the sea!
Look on the tragic loading of this bed;
This is thy work: the object poisons sight;
Let it be hid.—Gratiano, keep the house,
And seize upon the fortunes of the Moor,
For they succeed on you.—To you, lord governor,
Remains the censure of this hellish villain:
The time, the place, the torture,—oh, enforce it!
Myself will straight aboard, and to the state
This heavy act with heavy heart relate." [*Exeunt.*

When Lodovico and others entered the chamber, Othello was almost buried in the bed, weeping over the body of his wife; and no sooner had Lodovico spoken than "the unfortunate man" stood up and answered—

"That 's he that *was* Othello; here I am."

He was too fully alive to the rashness and barbarity of his deed not to feel thoroughly disappointed and disgusted with himself. No longer was he the Othello that was, but a criminal, guilty of a capital offence and deserving the highest punishment. He had intended to inflict the sentence on himself after explaining his act to Gratiano, but he had been overpowered with grief; and now all were come and he should forthwith proceed to discharge that sacred duty. He turned round to speak to them, but before he uttered a word, his eyes fell on the devil that was before him, and the sight was so unbearable he flung upon the fiend with his sword; but he could inflict nothing worse than a wound. It is awful to think that even at that stage, with his deviltry defeated, disclosed and discovered, Iago could indulge in a grim retort, and feel a secret satisfaction and pride

in an oblique acknowledgment of his devilship:

"I bleed, sir, but not kill'd."

Indeed, how could he be killed, devil that he was, though his cloven feet were not to be seen! and Othello was not sorry either, for, as he then felt, it was "happiness to die." There were only two things he wished to learn before he said "a word or two" in explanation of his deed and put an end to himself. Wherefore had the devil so "ensnared his soul and body?" and how had Cassio come by that handkerchief he had in his hand in the evening? Of the one, the explanation was simple —Cassio had found the handkerchief in his chamber, and Iago had just confessed to having thrown it there "for a special purpose which wrought to his desire." Of the other, the why and wherefore was as much a puzzle to the "demi-devil" as to others: and besides, he was determined to hold his peace!

"Demand me nothing: what you know, you know;
From this time forth I never will speak word."

But he had spoken enough! Oh, what inhuman brute Othello was to have put an end to a most virtuous and heavenly wife, and plotted against the life of a loving and faithful friend! "Dear general, I never gave you cause" was all Cassio would say to the man who had consented in his murder and commanded it! He loved him all the same, and pitied him for his having "fall'n in the practice of a cursèd slave," and felt no resentment against him, for he knew he was "great of heart" and honourable and could do "naught in hate." What reparation could the Moor do to such a good friend but to ask his pardon and feel thankful that his murder had failed? And what reparation could he do for the crime that had succeeded, for the cruel wrong he had done his wife but go to her in that far-off world and beseech her for-

giveness? It was indeed a "happiness" to the Moor, after the calamitous blunder he had committed, to pass away from life, restored to love and friendship—to fly from the abyss of earthly sin and crime, and the harrowing agony and desperation of soul, to heavenly penitence and hope, with his faith revived in goodness and purity and virtue. And terribly painful as it was, and pitiful in the extreme, the end was heroic, when, after saying a few touching words about himself and his service to the state, weeping for his fall and "dropping tears, as fast as the Arabian trees their med'cinable gum," for the rare and invaluable pearl he had basely thrown away, the noble Moor drew out his dagger and executed the stern sentence on himself and fell on the corpse of his wife, to die upon a kiss—to be, let us hope, for evermore, in the sweet company of the beloved angel with whom his wedded bliss on earth had endured for a brief month and no more! It was a death which at once exalted the dying man and atoned for the bloody events which had preceded it; and "the tragic loading" of the bed became less poisonous to sight and more bearable by addition! As we withdraw ourselves from the awful spectacle, we feel thankful for the unravelment which had led to it, and find comfort in the contemplation of the glorious vision, granted to us, of the souls which passed away; and we assure ourselves, despite the desperate wailing of the Moor, that "the lips that had pardoned him in this life will not plead against him in in the next." And we look upon it as no small blessing, the deliverance, which seems promised to us, from the dreadful danger of the devil-man, "more fell than anguish, hunger, or the sea," caught in his own toils and awaiting instant trial and condemnation. Will the arch-villain "ope his lips," or will he meet his death as coolly as "ever did the tortured philosopher before him?"

CHAPTER X

CONCLUSION

I

Do not be startled, dear reader, to learn that, at the trial, Iago did "ope his lips," though with extreme reluctance, to say "a word or two" about himself, not indeed to plead for mercy, but to let the world know that, despite everything which seemed to speak against him, he was honest and true, and had done naught that was wicked or dishonourable. He had learnt a good lesson in this life—it was sure to profit him in the next—and had received ample reward for his loving services, and felt thankful for it. And now, it was a pleasure to him to pass away from this world, for those he had loved and lived for were already in another—his own dear wife Emilia, the divine Desdemona whose commands and entreaties he was not sorry he had obeyed, and the unfortunate Moor, so changed after his marriage, withal a good, great, and noble soul. Death was indeed a welcome relief to Iago, and he bowed to the new Governor, with all the resignation of an innocent criminal submitting to inevitable doom.

Cassio was "perplex'd in the extreme." He looked at Montano, and both presently turned their eyes to Gratiano: all were mute with astonishment. The sudden metamorphosis of "honest" Iago into a fiendish villain had struck everyone with surprise and horror, and now, his speech and silence alike created a maddening curiosity. Evidently, there was something strange yet to be known.

"And you have killed your poor wife whose death you now seem to lament?" asked the new Governor.

"Killed my wife!" ejaculated Iago, "O God of Heaven and Hell! Oh, well, I had best hold my peace: it is not worse than the other crimes laid at my door. Yes, I killed my wife. I ran behind her when the Moor pounced upon me, and I stabbed her deliberately, with intent to get rid of her, of course! I had merely *pretended* to ward off the general's sword with mine, and it was no accident that plunged my weapon into the body of my wife—no. I confess my crime and await my end. I am so glad I was mistaken—I was afraid I had hurt the general."

The Governor and the Signiors consulted together. They agreed that Emilia's death might have been the result of pure accident: the attack and the defence were sudden and momentary. But how about the contents of the letters which were found in the pocket of Roderigo? How about Iago's confession that he had thrown the handkerchief in Cassio's lodging? and the report he admitted he had made to Othello that Desdemona had been "false with Cassio?"

At length, Iago began to relate the whole tale of the tragedy, to the utter astonishment of his hearers. He was unwilling to make any disclosures which might lead to further mischief and misery, but he did it in the interests of truth and justice, though thereby he could not revive the dead. They had all noted the disguise of Roderigo; noted, too, the terror-stricken looks of Bianca when she appeared immediately after the attack on Cassio, her "staring" and the "gastness of her eye." Well—thereby hung a tale. Roderigo, it was widely known, had once aspired to marry the ill-starred daughter of Brabantio, but the old senator prohibited his suit and warned him off his house. The young man would not,

however, give up his ambition, and even after the damsel's marriage with the Moor, he pursued her to Cyprus, and travelled on board the same ship, having disguised his identity "with an usurped beard" and enlisted himself as a soldier. What was almost incredible, he revealed himself in a note to Desdemona and had the audacity to tell her that she had committed a blunder in having married the Moor, that she was sure to repent of her strange choice, that a girl of her "delicate tenderness" could only feel happy in the company of one who combined "loveliness in favour" with "sympathy in years, manners, and beauties, all which the Moor was defective in," that he was following her all the way from Venice, in the hope that she would reconsider her position and favour him with the love and happiness she had once promised and would have granted him if her father had not interfered, that it was still open to her to quit the Moor and assert her first free choice, being away from her father, that, failing success, he was determined to drown himself! Desdemona was startled to receive such a note from a former suitor, and she treated it with the contempt it deserved: but the infatuated lover continued to bother her with fresh notes, and all the warning she conveyed to him through Emilia was of no avail. So, a few hours before their landing in Cyprus, she sent for Iago and acquainted him with the nuisance she must get rid of. Roderigo should be sent back to Venice, on some pretext or other, without exposing his disguise or bringing his foolish conduct to the notice of her lord. That was the command which was given, and Iago felt bound to obey it.

On the night of their landing in Cyprus, it was true Iago had suggested to Roderigo that he should insult Cassio "on the watch," and had hoped by that means to get the soldier cashiered and sent away to Venice

on the ship which sailed the very next morning. But as ill-luck would have it, things went contrary to his expectation. Cassio was beside himself with drink, and beat and chased the impertinent man and wounded Montano who interposed to stay him. And the brawl and alarm roused the Moor from his nuptial bed, and, much as Iago "minced the matter and made it light to Cassio," the general felt bound to make an example of him and dismissed him. Heaven knew how sincerely Iago grieved for Cassio's misfortune and helped him with his counsel, how often he went to Signior Montano and spoke to him of Cassio's high abilities and pleaded for his restoration, how often, at his request, his wife reminded her mistress of the "displeasure" of the dismissed lieutenant and arranged for his interviews with her: and Cassio knew very well how very kindly the good lady spoke to him and pleaded his cause with her lord, how she "vowed a friendship to him," gave him "warrant of his place" and said she would sooner "die than give his cause away." Well, all that was nothing new: but there was something Iago must now reveal, which was known only to himself and his wife—something on which he would fain seal his lips.

On the morning after Cassio's dismissal, Iago had an open talk with Roderigo about his disguise and the impudent letters he had sent to Desdemona on board the ship, and threatened to reveal the whole matter to the general unless he consented to resign and go back to Venice immediately. The poor man shook with fear and promised nevermore to repeat his silliness, and begged not to be forced to leave Cyprus at once, for he had another interest there, over which he had expended almost the whole of his fortune. And, to Iago's utter amazement, he revealed that he had for some months been a secret lover of Bianca, that she fully recipro-

cated his love but did not know how to free herself from Cassio, that he had given her presents of money and jewels, which had almost swallowed up his estate, that he had come to Cyprus really for her sake and at her request, and should be a ruined man altogether if now he went back to Venice without her or at least without recovering his costly presents which had been given her on express condition. Iago did not know whether to thank or curse Roderigo for his amourette, but certainly he pitied Cassio. He set about to test the truth of Roderigo's tale and convinced himself in a couple of weeks that Cassio was an utter simpleton in the hands of a wily prostitute, who pretended to dote on him ever, but really wished to get rid of him and, with that view evidently, had not only set afloat a rumour that he was intending to marry her, but "haunted him in every place," and "hung about his neck," and "lolled and wept upon him" in the presence of others. Well, Iago must admit he would have been glad if Roderigo had run away with the wretch and freed Cassio from her: but the woman was too cunning to do anything openly or in haste. She would wait until Cassio, giving up all hope of reappointment, proposed to leave the place, and then she would refuse to follow him. Roderigo, however, was impatient. He insisted on her immediate flight with him, or on the return of his jewels; failing which, he threatened to divulge everything, and damn her and himself. Iago interposed and entreated Roderigo to extend his patience for a little while longer: he feared that the ugly revelations which the fool was ready to make might affect Cassio's reputation and interfere with his reinstatement. So, he kept him away from his mistress for a whole week and hoped the scandal would be secretly settled: but, no, she would neither return the jewels (she said she could not, having left them all at Venice) nor

follow her favourite lover (which Roderigo believed he was). She would wait and wait until Cassio's fate was settled; and so, Roderigo became "discontented" and dissatisfied, and was even angry with Iago for his intervention. That was the story about Bianca and Roderigo, but there was another, more wonderful still, about Othello and Desdemona!

The world is guided by appearances, and few would believe that the Moor and his lady had not led a happy life together. But it was a fact they did not, and scarcely had two weeks elapsed since their landing in Cyprus than Emilia discovered it, and Desdemona began to think she would have been happier, unmarried, in her father's home, and blamed herself for the hasty step she had taken and the heartlessness with which she had disregarded the old man's feelings and married the Moor. "It is my wretched fortune," she often said to herself in the hearing of Emilia. Her lord was kind and loving, no doubt, but evidently jealous: he taunted her almost every day upon her persistent advocacy of Cassio's cause, and told her to her face—even in the presence of Emilia—that she seemed to be enamoured with the young Florentine and would probably have felt happier with him, for he was possessed of good looks and engaging manners and was young into the bargain. Gentle Desdemona sometimes took it as a joke, but sometimes the joke was too much for her gentle breeding, and she wept: then the Moor would laugh it out, tell her she was a baby, and make it up with a kiss, and the guileless wife would forget everything and plead Cassio's cause with greater warmth on the next occasion. Emilia, too, had thought it was all a rough joke, but it soon became clear to her that the days of her mistress's wedded bliss were numbered, and even Desdemona felt herself like a lamb in the grip of a lion, and sometimes

prayed to heaven that she might be sent away to her father with her life! Still, to the world, the husband and wife appeared so happy in their union, no one would have suspected there was any discord between them; and Iago pooh-poohed it as altogether stupid and silly when, quite recently, Emilia spoke to him somewhat seriously about it, and even hinted that he should, if he could, help the lady to obtain a divorce. Still, the simple wife pleaded Cassio's cause without fear, and was prepared (so Emilia told him) to admit her love for the young officer and even confess to the guilty act with him if that would secure her freedom. Iago, of course, could not set any value on Emilia's foolish words, and rebuked her sharply for her crass ignorance which misinterpreted the pranks and quarrels of lovers. And sure, Iago could not, for his life, have suspected or anticipated any trouble. What, then, was his surprise, when, on the fatal Sunday morning, the general and he returned to the castle, and Cassio, who had been speaking with Desdemona, suddenly took leave of her and made his exit by the side door, quite humbled and out of countenance, and the general, observing it, muttered to himself, almost involuntarily, "Ha! I like not that!" The next minute, he asked Iago why Cassio had "stolen away so guilty-like, seeing him coming," and when he explained that the poor man was "languishing in his displeasure" and was thereby dispirited and ill at ease, Othello would not accept the explanation, but charged him with being "partially affin'd" to his brother officer. He then "contracted and pursed his brow together," told him that Cassio "was of his counsel in his whole course of wooing" and asked him to say, without fear, what he thought about Cassio's honesty and Desdemona's fidelity. "If thou dost love me, show me thy thought" said the general,

"and give thy worst of thoughts the worst of words." Iago swore that Cassio was honest to the core, and swore, too, that Desdemona was heavenly pure and chaste, and begged the Moor not to pollute his mind with any "unclean apprehensions" about her. Still he said:

> "Thou dost conspire against thy friend, Iago,
> If thou but think'st him wrong'd and mak'st his ear
> A stranger to thy thoughts."

Iago entreated the Moor not to shape faults that were not, not to "build himself a trouble" out of simple, innocent circumstances, not to ruin his happiness for nothing: but he lectured to him on "good name in man and woman," and said he was resolved not to permit the least stain on his honour. He had dreamt some days back that Cassio lay in the same bed with Desdemona, that he kissed her once and again, and told her, 'Sweet Desdemona, let us be wary, let us hide our loves;' and his observance of that morning supported his dream. He begged Iago, in the name of truth and honour and friendship, to take pity on him and resolve his doubt and earn his lasting gratitude. What could Iago do but again take his oath on Cassio's honesty and Desdemona's purity and warn the general to "beware of jealousy"—" the green-ey'd monster which doth mock the meat it feeds on?" But it was all to no purpose, for Othello replied that his was not a mind that was prone to jealousy:

> "No, Iago!
> I' ll see before I doubt; when I doubt, prove:
> And on the proof there is no more but this,
> Away at once with love or jealousy!"

And he said he was prepared to hear the worst report against his wife and would never make a life of jealousy but whistle her off if he proved her unfaithful. But evi-

dently, he made no difference between proof and suspicion. He had heard of the wily pranks of Venetian women and believed "their best conscience was not to leave 't undone, but keep 't unknown," and would not be surprised to learn that Desdemona was no exception. She had "deceived her father, marrying him; and when she seemed to shake and fear his looks, she lov'd them most." And he questioned whether

> "She that, so young, could give out such a seeming
> To seel her father's eyes up close as oak—
> He thought 'twas witchcraft!—"

was not capable of deceiving her husband likewise. He had often felt puzzled why, wandering from the natural course and discarding her own countrymen, she had chosen him for her husband. Ay, there was the point.

> "Not to affect many proposèd matches
> Of her own clime, complexion, and degree,
> Whereto we see in all things nature tends—
> Foh! one may smell in such, a will most rank,
> Foul disproportion, thoughts unnatural."

Her own father had predicted it and his parting words on the night of the marriage rankled in Othello's soul:

> "Look to her, Moor, if thou hast eyes to see;
> She has deceiv'd her father, and may thee."

Iago told the general again and again that Cassio was a worthy man and honest, and a most faithful friend, and swore again that Desdemona was pure as an angel, and said it was sacrilege to suspect her: but still he talked of his dream, of his opinion of Venetian women, still clung to his superstition and suspicion, and asked Iago if it was not *possible* that there might be something wrong between Cassio and Desdemona, for he could not ignore his sudden and stealthy departure on that morning. Iago got vexed with the Moor and replied that *anything* and *everything* was POSSIBLE under the

sun: upon which he said that was enough for him. Cæsar's wife must be above suspicion, and the Moor was no man to wear horns! Iago begged the general not to lose himself in that manner, but he turned a deaf ear to all entreaty, bade him a hasty farewell, and dismissed him, as it was already dinner-time and he was awaited.

"Yes, he was late in coming to the banquet, and was busy, we were told, conferring with Iago," whispered Montano to Cassio and Gratiano: "and he withdrew before the banquet was over, pleading indisposition!"

Iago continued his narrative. While the banquet was proceeding, Emilia brought her mistress's handkerchief and gave it him. He had seen it constantly with Desdemona, seen her kiss it and talk to it, and suspected it was a talisman with which the Moor had won his lady's affections. He believed it had strange virtues, and it was true he had told his wife, once and again, that Cassio's misfortune could be set right at once with the aid of that handkerchief: but, certainly, he had never asked her to steal it! and had received it from her only to return it in a day or two. Directly he got it, he went to Cassio's lodging, but as he was sleeping, he threw it into his room and went away, with the certain belief that luck would turn in his favour before the close of another day.

Othello sent for Iago late in the afternoon and renewed his talk of that morning. He was convinced of his wife's infidelity—he did not wish to argue about it—and was resolved to send her away to her father's home and be done with her. (Iago thought the gods themselves were working on behalf of the ill-starred wife). With regard to Cassio, his course was still unsettled. He had proved treacherous and had cuckolded him, and must be punished and sent to hell. He would have him nine years a-killing!

> "Oh, that the slave had forty thousand lives!
> One is too poor, too weak for my revenge."

Those were his very words. He would not listen to reason—he needed no advice—and burnt with fury, and was so beside himself with passion that he swooned! Strangely enough, Cassio happened to go there just at that time and proposed to "rub him about the temples" to revive him to consciousness: but Iago somehow managed to send him away, lest the general might "break out to savage madness" and spring upon him. Soon afterwards, Othello woke up and retired to his chamber; but evidently, he hid himself somewhere and watched the meeting, which took place in the court of the castle between Cassio and Iago, and likewise espied the handkerchief which passed between Bianca and Cassio. Later on, he sent for Iago again, and to his utter bewilderment, commanded him to undertake a *murder!*

> "Within these three days let me hear thee say
> That Cassio is not alive."

Iago attempted to speak, but the general would not listen. Obedience, not advice nor argument, was what he wanted! It was indeed a critical moment for Iago, and he felt thankful to heaven for the sudden advent of Signior Lodovico and Desdemona on the scene, and the consequant interruption of the unholy conference. Signior Lodovico did not fail to observe the general's rude and barbarous behaviour to his wife—he abused her in their presence and struck her on the cheek!—he thought the Moor's wits were not safe. Iago gave him a hint of his fears, even then, but hoped the jealous husband might return to his senses: and sure, he could never have dreamt of the awful catastrophe that was so near. Indeed, he was delighted to learn that the general and his lady attended church that evening (he did not go there himself owing to the anxious perplexity he had

been thrown into) and looked quite cheerful and happy. But he was destined to be disappointed—desperately! For, immediately after returning from church, the Moor sent for him, and was in a most dangerous and infuriate mood, having been provoked to it, he was told, by Desdemona's attentions to Cassio on her way home. He demanded him to say 'yes' or 'no' to his friendly request, as he called it, and if he could not very well undertake the task himself, being a friend of Cassio's, he was at liberty to assign it to any trustworthy man. Iago was at a loss for an expedient to escape, and said he had a fit fellow in view for the deed: and the general compelled him on the spot to write a chit to him and wait till he came. That was the history of his letter to Roderigo, who presently arrived and received the order of the general to despatch Cassio, and readily bowed in obedience! Iago and Roderigo then departed together from the castle, and on the way, Iago told the obedient soldier that the general was out of his wits, and even his command could not excuse a deed of deliberate murder: and they both agreed to meet the next morning and discuss the matter further. After supper, Iago hastened to Bianca's, whither Cassio had told him he would go that night, with a view to warn the friend of the situation: but, having stayed there till midnight and unwilling to have an aside with him at the place, he returned home, postponing his warning and revelation until daybreak. But, oh, what was his surprise when, a few minutes after he reached home and undressed himself, he heard cries of murder and ran to the spot with his shirt on and found his friend wounded and bleeding! What "bloody thieves" had waylaid him in the dark? Cassio had brought down one of them, but the other had escaped. What misfortune was pursuing the good friend, who, Iago was rejoicing, was to step into the

general's place the next day! It never flashed upon Iago's brain that the attack was Roderigo's work, for he had promised to meet him in the morning, to discuss the general's command. But no sooner had Bianca appeared at the place and betrayed her "guiltiness" by her looks than Iago guessed the truth. He had only to take his light and examine the face of the assailant, to discover, to his great mortification, it was no other than Roderigo! He had no idea who the second could have been, but it was clear Roderigo had been spurred on to the deed by Bianca: he must have been at her place all the time they were chatting, and evidently left it a few minutes in advance of Cassio. Oh, the treacherous whore! And what a night of murders and horrors! What a tragedy of errors! Who could have expected that the Moor, so noble and honourable, would have turned out a midnight murderer—of a woman, of a most loving, angelic wife! Iago should gladly have added his own self to "the tragic loading of the bed," but oh, he was fated to live, even to unfold the tragic tale: and now, having no weapon with him to inflict on himself a soldier's death, he must needs welcome a criminal's, and beg his kind friend, the new Governor, to relieve him of his wretched life, which to him was henceforth a burden, absolutely unbearable, painful, and purposeless.

The Governor and his Councillors were utterly dumbstricken. There was the ring of truth in Iago's tale, and the circumstances proved it to a point. A search was made in Bianca's, and even the brooch which was found in her possession spoke against her, for it bore Roderigo's crest and monogram! Who could believe the strumpet's oath that she had received it from Iago? It was a desperate effort at recrimination and might have puzzled the judges but for the conclusive marks which established the ownership of the ornament!

II

And now, dear reader, will you think that Iago was condemned to die all the same, or was confirmed in his lieutenancy and allowed to pass for an honester man than ever! Nay, shudder not at the suggestion that the "hellish villain" escaped death and torture and the "censure" of the judge, which had all but overtaken him: nor fancy that he lived, as before, a fiend amongst men, to tempt them and ruin them, yet remain under his mask a danger and defiance to goodness and justice and the moral order of the world! Horrible as the unmasking of Iago must be even on the stage, and to mere imagination, it would be a maddening, most dangerous revelation in living life—a dreadful, never-fading cloud over love and friendship and honesty, a death-blow to trust and peace and all feeling of security. That an infernal demi-devil could exist in human form, without the cloven feet, were knowledge enough to stagger and stupefy humanity: but oh, let no generation of men know him in the flesh except as an honest, straightforward man and a sincere and loving friend; let no one see him unmasked, for, after such a sight, earthly existence would be impossible—unendurable! Lesser villains may be exposed with benefit to humanity—they may be guarded against, their fate might serve as an example: but Iago—Iago, the arch-villain!—his exposure must needs be a calamity to the world; fear, suspicion and helplessness must perforce paralyse and tear the bonds of human society. Who can guard himself against this honest friend? The simple Moor and the shrewdest intellect of the world alike must step into his silken net and never know it until it is too late—until the call has come from another world, and the knell is tolled for

them in this, even as they depart! Iago is not for human souls to know who have yet to run their probation in this life—this world of good and evil both combined. He may be seen without danger and known but by those whose probation here has reached the end, whose imperfections have been cured even by contact with him, who are lifted into a life where no evil can be, where all is goodness and purity and perfection. For others, oh, let there be a veil over the venom-souled villain, and let the poet reveal him to posterity as a monster of bygone times, whose mere contemplation is appalling, whose death and dissolution have left the world freer, happier, better, whose rebirth may not be perhaps for many long centuries! And let us assure ourselves that Iago who escaped punishment at the hands of man ceased to be Iago any longer, for, indeed the tragedy of Othello and Desdemona was no less the tragedy of the arch-villain. He had endured months of bitter expectancy and patient misery of soul, exercised his intellect, day and night, for the achievement of his diablerie, strained his powers and resources to their very utmost, yet lost all control over his schemes, found himself in the most dangerous and critical situations, and passed through such hair-breadth 'scapes on that memorable last day of his evil career, that, in the end, even he could not help realising his wretched, diabolical character. And he muttered a grim and pitiable, though oblique and barefaced, acknowledgment of his devilship—

"I bleed, sir, but not kill'd"—

when he found himself face to face with conviction and torture and death, when the situation seemed all hopeless and his intellect failed him for a ready shift, and he needed time for thinking out his defence, and silence was his best safeguard! In spite of the success which, we may assume, attended his ultimate effort to evade

punishment, Iago, it is certain, stood convicted and condemned by himself, and learnt the lofty truth that 'wickedness is after all a bad investment.' Even he must have felt quite tired in the end, and, recognising the signal defeat of his evil machinations, drawn a breath of relief at his lucky acquittal. But his escape was by no means the triumph of evil. It was the death of wickedness, the conversion of vice into goodness and righteousness, the transformation of a demi-devil into a human being and his diversion from a life of callous, malignant inhumanity to a career of remorseful soul-revival. That was the great nemesis which overtook Iago, and his spiritual metamorphosis, against himself, was torture far more excruciating—infinitely more beneficial—than any torments that human hands could have applied. Evil had fulfilled its purpose in this world; goodness had stood its test and survived it, and, purged, in its trial, of all trace of human imperfection, become fit for another world; and evil itself, in return, received its due reward and soon was into goodness metamorphosed! Yet, how poor this consolation to human mortals whose eyes must weep for the dead and hearts must throb, how puzzling the conclusion which takes away from amidst us those who would have been dear to us for ever, and ever! And our only guide must be the moral that we learn: *The love which draws man and woman together and unites them in sacred bonds is a supreme and inviolable force, but it may not rudely sever itself from the parent stem on which it had grown, even as it should be respected in its turn when it expands into parental love and its offspring seeks conjugality and independence.*

THE

DOUBLE TIME DELUSION

THE

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GENERAL REMARKS

ON the authority of Aristotle, the Greek tragedians generally observed what are known as 'the three dramatic unities,' viz., the unity of action, the unity of place and the unity of time: that is, that there should be but one main plot, that the place of the action before the spectators should be one and the same throughout the piece, and that the time supposed should not exceed twenty-four hours. Coleridge has rightly pointed out that the unity of action (or, more properly, unity of interest) can hardly be styled a canon for observance, for in itself it is "the great end not only of the drama, but of the epic poem, the lyric ode, of all poetry," in fact. And it is certain that the unities of time and place, if strictly observed, must interfere with the development of the action; for, if the law of actual perception is not to be violated, there must be not only no change of scene throughout the drama but no more time should be allotted to the events comprised in it than is occupied in their actual representation on the stage: (even the Greek tragedians observed the unity of time only by stretching it to a day in actual life). Besides, if imagination were allowed to supersede perception to any extent, there is no reason, as the same critic of critics has remarked, why it should be considered "more difficult to imagine three hours to be three years than to be a whole day and night": neither would it be any great strain on the

powers of realisation to represent the stage at intervals, as one place and another as the case may be.

Shakespeare's creative genius, however, required no canons to guide it in the production of his plays; neither did it permit any artificial restrictions to interfere with its natural flight. The unity of action is of course fully respected in his dramas, for they are indeed perfect works of art in which there are no superflous scenes, and each and every scene depicted has some bearing on the main action, some function in the development of the plot, and leads to the inevitable conclusion by gradual and imperceptible stages. The other two unities, however, are completely disregarded. They are got over in a most ingenious manner, by unique touches which readily reconcile us not only to imagining the scene to be, at short intervals, in Rome or in Egypt, in Venice or in Cyprus, city or forest, but to actually feel that days, months, and even years have elapsed before our eyes! The master-artist has in fact defied the classic rules by contriving to produce verisimilitude in the place to which the scene shifts and the time to which the action flies, and he has done this with admirable skill and in a most subtle manner.

Verisimilitude in dramatic place the poet has produced (as the Cowden-Clarkes have pointed out) by "picturesque touches, marking the actual presence of the surroundings amid which the speaker is stationed." These touches are so vivid, and so apt and effective, that imagination can scarcely fail to adjust itself to the most violent change of scene that may be forced upon it—from country to country, from land to sea, or from banquet to battlefield—and finds itself quite as easily and quickly inside a bedchamber or a council-room as in an orchard or on the bank of a river, in the pleasant moonlight as in the heart of tempest and storm, in the

street or the churchyard as within a cave or on board a ship. But the process by which the master-dramatist has got over the classic restriction and produced verisimilitude in dramatic time, and depicted in his plays the events of a few hours, days, months, or years, as he pleased, is somewhat subtle. It is, however, quite simple, often consisting in indications or inferences (thrown into the dialogues) of the lapse of long time—days, months or years—the principal action of the drama being confined (to give it the appearance of continuity, short duration, and verisimilitude) to one, two, or more consecutive days, connected with scenes of a prior day or days by an interval or intervals, more or less long, during which the course and progress of the action indicated at start is left to imagination and perception. In some places, the interval is disguised with such consummate art that critics have failed to discover it and felt puzzled by irreconcilable indications of long time and short time, which confronted them in their study. Many eminent scholars have been content to consider the discrepancies as faults and accepted the conclusion that Shakespeare wrote only for the stage and did not trouble himself to reconcile inconsistencies which he knew would pass unnoticed by the audience at the theatre. Others have attributed them to the imperfections of the text and the inaccuracies which had crept into it, while the general tide of opinion seems to have recently run in favour of that original theory of 'double time,' enunciated by two learned scholars, Wilson and Halpin, each gentleman laying claim to its independent discovery. It were enough to explode this extraordinary theory, to point out how the time-puzzles which have been discovered are only apparent, resulting from imperfect comprehension of the poet's art, but the doctrine has obtained such a wide

acceptance that a short history of it cannot be out of place, and a few words of honest criticism exposing its inherent absurdity, will not, I trust, be misunderstood.

About the close of 1849, Professor John Wilson ('Christopher North') came out in the pages of *Blackwood's Magazine* with a most 'astounding discovery' which professed to explain and reconcile the discrepancies of time which critics found in the plays of Shakespeare. According to that learned Professor, Shakespeare has a unique method of dealing with time in his dramas, "whereby in the most artful manner he conveys two opposite ideas of its flight: swiftness and slowness; by one series of allusions, we receive the impression that the action of the drama is driving ahead in storm, while by another series, we are insensibly beguiled into the belief that it extends over days and months and even years! This wondrous art the learned Professor illustrated by a minute analysis of the duration of the action in *Othello* and in *Macbeth*; while about the same time (1850), the Rev. J. Halpin put forth a kindred theory and illustrated it in *The Merchant of Venice*. Later, the Cowden-Clarkes were so carried away by the discovery of "combined long and short time in Shakespeare's dramatic art"—the "simultaneous progress of protracted time and current time, both together,"—they spent laborious days and nights over almost every play of the poet, in the search and collection of passages which indicate 'short time' and 'long time,' and, in 1879, the result of their labours was published to the world in their *Shakespeare Key*, pp. 105-283. And the *Athenæum*, in reviewing this work, commended the theory of 'double time' to the attention of Shakespearean scholars, and of course it had good reason for doing so: for the theory at once explained the inexplicable in *Othello*, solved the difficulty of time

in *Julius Cæsar,* reconciled the discrepancies in *The Tempest* and revealed new beauties in every play! Finally, the learned editor of the *New Variorum Shakespeare* gave the theory the stamp of respect and perpetuity, by becoming a convert to it and expounding it with all the weight and authority of his erudition.

Let us look into Professor Wilson's "admirable" exposition of his doctrine of double time in *Othello,* in which, more than in any other play of Shakespeare's, the element of time has created insuperable obstacles to critics. Says the learned Professor:

"The usefulness of the Two Times is palpable from first to last—of the Short Time for maintaining the tension of the passion—of the Long for a thousand general needs. Thus Bianca must be used for convincing Othello very potently, positively, unanswerably. But she cannot be used without supposing a protracted intercourse between her and Cassio. Iago's dialogue with him falls to the ground if the acquaintance began yesterday. But superincumbent over all is the *necessity of our not knowing* that Iago begins the Temptation, and that Othello extinguishes the Light of his Life, all in one day. And observe how this concatenation of the passionate scenes operates. Let the Entrances of Othello be four—A, B, C, D. You feel the close connection of A with B, of B with C, of C with D. You feel the coherence, the nextness, and all the force of the impetuous Action and Passion resulting. But the logically-consequent near connection of A with C, and much more with D, as again of B with D, you *do not feel.* Why? When you are at C, and feeling the pressure of B upon C, you have lost sight of the pressure of A upon B. At each entrance you go back one step—you do not go back two. The suggested intervals continually keep displacing to distances in your memory the formerly felt connections. This could not so well happen in real life where the relations of time are strictly bound upon your memory, though something of it happens when passion devours memory. But in fiction, the conception being loosely held, and shadowy, the feat becomes easily practicable. Thus the Short Time tells for the support of the Passion, along with the Long Time, by means of virtuous installations from the hand or wing of Oblivion. From one to two you feel no intermission—from two to three you feel none—from three to four you feel none; but I defy any man to say that from one to four he has felt none. I defy any man to say honestly that 'sitting at the Play' he has kept count from one to four. Besides every past Scene, constituting a marked moment in the progress of the Play, has the effect for the Poet, as well as for you, of protracting the time in retrospect,—throwing everything that has passed further back. The goings-out and re-enterings of Othello have

a strangely deluding effect—they disconnect the time more than you can think—and all the changes of persons on the stage, all shiftings of scenes and droppings of curtains, break and dislocate and dilate the time to your imagination, till you do not in the least know where you are. In this laxity of your conception, all hints of extended time sink in and spring up, like that fungus which, on an apt soil, in a night grows to a foot diameter. Shakespeare, we have seen, in his calmer constructions, shows, in a score of ways, weeks, months; that is therefore the true time, or call it the historical time. Hurried himself, and hurrying you on the torrent of passion, he forgets time, and a false show of time, to the utmost contracted, arises. I do not know whether he did not perceive this false exhibition of time, or perceiving, he did not care. But we all must see a reason, and a cogent one, why he should not let in the markings of protraction upon his dialogues of the Seduced and the Seducer. If you ask me, How stood the time in the mind of Shakespeare? I answer, I do not know. * * *

"Illusion, a constituent of Poetry, is WHEN THE SAME THING IS, AND IS NOT. Pa—God bless him!—makes believe to be a Lion. He roars, and springs upon his prey. He at once believes himself to be a Lion, and knows himself to be Pa. Just so with the Shakespeare Club—many millions strong. The two times at Cyprus *are there:* the reason for the two times—to wit, probability of the Action, storm of the Passion—*is there;* and if any wiseacre should ask, 'How do we manage to stand the *known* together-proceeding of two times?' the wiseacre is answerd—'We don't stand it—for we know nothing about it. We are held in a confusion and a delusion about the time.' We have effect of both—distinct knowledge of neither. We have suggestions to our Understanding of extended time—we have movements of our Will by precipitated time. Does any man by possibility ask for a scheme and an exposition, by which it shall be made luminous to the smallest capacity *how* we are able distinctly all along to know, and bear in mind, that the preceding transactions are accomplished in a day, and at the same time and therewithal, distinctly all along to know and bear in mind that the same transactions proceeding before our eyes take about three months to accomplish? Then, I am obliged—like the musicians, when they are told that, if they have any music that may not be heard, Othello desires them to play it—to make answer, 'Sir, we have none such.' It is to ask that a deception shall be not only seemingly but really a truth! If you ask me—which judiciously you may—what or how much did the Swan of Avon intend and know of all this astonishing legerdemain, when he sang thus astonishingly? Was he, the juggler, juggled by aërial spirits,—as Puck or Ariel? I put my finger to my lips, and nod on him to do the same; and if I am asked, 'Shall a modern artificer of the Drama, having the same pressure from within and from without, adopt this resource of evasion?' I can answer with great confidence, He had better look before he leap."

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"A good-natured Juggler * * has cheated your eyes. You ask him to show you how he did it. He does the trick slowly—and you see. 'Now, good Conjurer, *do it slowly and cheat us.*' 'I can't. I cheat you by doing it quickly. To be cheated, you must *not* see what I do; but you must *think* that you see.' When we inspect the Play in our closets the Juggler does his trick slowly. We sit at the Play, and he does it quick. When you see the trick again done the right way,—that is, quick,—you cannot conceive how it is that you no longer see that which you saw when it was done slowly! Again the impression returns of a magical feat."

This is the long and short of Professor Wilson's theory of 'double time.' It deceived him, it deceived many others who accepted it as explaining the extraordinary difficulty which confronted them in the reconciliation of events with the duration of time in *Othello.* Now that this tragedy has been fully unveiled, the reader will mark that the learned Professor's lucubration was, at the best, a most unhappy phantom of his brain, a fabric of inconsistent and impossible ideas. Professing, as it did, to clear up and explain the discrepancies of time in the dramas of Shakespeare, yea, to reveal the hidden beauties of his art, it threw the most dangerous dirt upon it, and converted the dramas into dreams, dreams bristling with inconsistencies but delightful in their deception! (And who is not deceived by the mysterious magic of a dream!) It degraded the poet from the divine artist that he was into a conjuring counterfeiter: it made him a manufacturer of literary make-believes and his readers and admirers a menagerie of muddleheads! Yet, the ridiculous theory escaped the condemnation it deserved, because it came out with the praises of Shakespeare and professed to furnish a solution for the "faults" in his plays—a subtle solution which proved them to be excellences! And it was readily welcomed by scholar after scholar as the golden key with which to open the locks of Shakespeare! while those whose heads positively

refused the hocus-pocus were content with barely denying its application, much as they felt their inability to explain the discrepancies which puzzled them.

To go through the elaborations which Professor Wilson's patent has received from later critics and commentators would turn one giddy and make one fancy that we are living in Dreamland where sense and logic might assume any shape and exist independently of limitations. To speak of a dramatist 'employing a double computation of time and so constructing a plot that the action simultaneously extends over a long period and yet is confined within a short one;' to say that he 'enforces short time by making one event follow close upon the heels of another and yet insinuates long time by forward and backword references which are not questioned by us in the absorbing interest of new scenes and new characters;' to say that, in the action of any drama, 'we actually see four days and three nights rapidly passing (without any interval), and yet we imagine we have seen weeks, months, even years, dragging their slow length along;' to assert that, in any part of any play, 'we are forced to conclude that the whole action takes places in less than two days, yet we observe many and clear indications that it extends over at least two months:'—to earthly motals, devoid of delusion and double vision, all this must sound like pure, unmeaning jargon, for which, the reader will observe, not the legerdemain of Shakespeare but the witchery of Wilson, the hallucination of Halpin, the credulity of the Cowden-Clarkes, and the faith of Furness, alone, can be held responsible.

It does not demand any great scrutiny to discover the hollowness of Professor Wilson's preposterous theory. Time and space are the very fundamentals of life —of existence and action—and the fixity of persons,

things, and events in relation to any particular period of time or any particular place, is absolutely essential to human conceptions. You could no more imagine that you witnessed certain events on two consecutive days, yet entertain the impression that those events occurred in the course of months and years, than you could think that you saw particular persons and things at a particular place at a particular time, yet fancy that at that very time, you saw the very same persons and things at some other place or places. A story, a novel, a drama, anything that purports to depict the events of life, must necessarily begin at one point of time and end at another, the period covered—whether plainly indicated or indistinctly implied—being as certain and unchangeable as the events. Even a child would refuse to listen to a tale in which at any stage you relate a day's life and ask it to count off months and years. Duplex notions regarding time and space and all variety of impossible transmutation and inconsistent imagination are known only in the happy region of dreams, where the subjective mind is free from all objective limitations; but they are unknown in the waking state, and every novelist and dramatist who professes to depict any portion of human life, must necessarily respect the notions of time and space we possess in the waking state; and he must indeed be a poor playwright, who, with the liberty he enjoys in the selection of characters, scenes and events, cannot give us a peep into life at any fixed points of time, and, leaving us to fill up the interval, cannot carry us forward to the day or days when a continuous chain of events leads to the conclusion.

Indeed, no story or drama can be constructed with 'double time;' for double time is no time and removes the events from the basis of time, on which they must stand, and floats them—in a vacuum! Let Professor

Wilson or any of his followers attempt to tell us in full the story of *Othello,* or *Hamlet,* or any play of Shakespeare's, fixing the events in time, day by day, week by week, and their tongues will get tied if they touch the twaddle of 'double time!' They must perforce talk in the groove of single time. But oh! Shakespeare wrote his plays for the stage, not for story-telling! And in front of the stage, Professor Wilson would challenge any man to escape the poet's gramarye and detect the duplex time which is forced; ay, even in the closet, says the Professor, few could detect the deception. Forsooth, a grand feat this for a great genius like Shakespeare to have accomplished! To produce dramas with incompatible defects of time, and by legerdemain to divert your attention and deceive your vision—oh, what a compliment to the master-dramatist to describe this as a unique touch of his art!

It amounts to this: that Shakespeare produced, not dramas but dreams; he depicted, not pictures of life on the canvas of true, historic time, of which we could retain vivid impressions in the mind, but visions floating in a delusive mirage of time, which must be seen or perceived with the stage or the book before us! Did he find it hard work to paint life on the plane of true time and produce the effect he has produced? It surely behoves us to think that the poet's creations are real, not counterfeit; that any time-puzzles they may present are neither faults which he did not trouble himself to rectify, nor indications of any abnormity of double time, but the products, possibly, of our purblind perception; that Shakespeare did belong to the region of sane beings, and wrote his dramas on the sane plane of single time. And what shall be said unto Professor Wilson and his admirers, if this turns out to be the truth, after all! O mighty Shakespeare! Permit us to perceive

thy simple art which has cheated scholars like very children! Grant us to feel the time-threads of thy puzzling plots and receive thy proper praise!

"OTHELLO"

The great puzzle which the duration of the action in this drama has presented to critics is due to the difficulty of discovering any long interval of time in the course of the events narrated, from the commencement of Act II to the very end of the tragedy. Act I relates events which transpired at Venice after twelve o'clock on the night of the secret marriage. There is then an interval for the voyage to Cyprus, and Act II opens in the island on the afternoon of landing and is closely connected with Act III. i. and ii., which record the events of the morning which followed. Act III. iii. *does not, however, describe Cassio's interview of that morning with Desdemona, which we are led to expect by the closing lines of* III. i. That first interview and others had taken place, and Iago was unable to bring the general 'jump' at the right moment, and the interview of which an account is actually given us in III. iii. is what took place on the morning of the last day, evidently some weeks after the dismissal. The conversation clearly indicates that Cassio had waited long enough for his promised restoration, and beginning to suspect danger from the 'policy' on which his reappointment was being postponed, pressed his suit somewhat impatiently and even hinted his apprehension that further delay might lead the general to forget his 'love and service.' The events described from III. iii. to the end of the play take place in less than twenty-four hours, and being necessarily full of links of very short duration, produce an impression of verisimilitude in dramatic time: the indications of long time which are interspersed in the conversation, serving to connect the events with those (left entirely to imagination) which took place in the interval between the first and last interviews of Cassio with Desdemona. The unique art of the dramatist lies in the apparent fusion of the interview expected at the end of III. i. with that which takes place in III. iii., throwing a short scene of six lines between, disguising a long interval of weeks, which means so much life, so many events, shut off from our view and left to our imagination. This interval which is essential for the natural growth and progress of events is so nicely bridged over that it escapes perception and the idea is produced of continuity in dramatic time.

The duration of the action in *Othello*, which has been fully indicated in the Exposition, may thus be summarised.

Act I commences immediately after the secret marriage, a little after midnight and closes in two or three hours. It is the new-moon day and the night is dark throughout.

[*An interval of seven days* follows, for the voyage from Venice to Cyprus. The time usually occupied by the voyage is two weeks, but the

speed of the ships is accelerated by the storm, and they reach Cyprus in seven days, quite seven days before the due time. II. i. 76, 77.]

Act II. i. and ii. take place on the evening of landing in Cyprus, and II. iii. on the night of the same day. It is the seventh night after the marriage, that is, the seventh night of the lunar month. The feasting is closed at 11 o'clock, and the moon sets between 11 and 12, so that Roderigo conveniently carries out his master's instructions in the dark, without any fear of recognition.

Act III. i. and ii. take place on the morning after landing in Cyprus.

[*An interval of four weeks* or one lunar month follows, during which Cassio sees Desdemona, once and again, and receives assurance of his restoration. The message to the Senate (III. ii.) reaches Cyprus two weeks later.—*Vide* Exposition, CHS. vi. and vii.]

The whole action from III. iii. to the end of the tragedy takes place in about sixteen hours, as follows:

III. iii. The first day after the above interval of four weeks. It is a Sunday; ll. 1-329, before dinner; ll. 330 to the end of the scene, after dinner.

iv. The same day, afternoon.

IV. i. The same day, later on towards evening.

ii. The same day—at night, before supper. It is the eighth day of the lunar month, and there is moonlight, ll. 78 and 151.

iii. The same night, after supper. The moon has not yet set, l. 62.

V. i. The same night, before 1 o'clock. The moon set between 12 and 1, and soon afterwards, Iago takes leave of Cassio at Bianca's and joins Roderigo. The dupe carries out his master's instructions under cover of darkness—ll. 63, 112.

ii. The same night; begins about 1 o'clock and closes before 3 a. m. The moon has set, but the stars are shining, l. 2.

The total duration of the action is *five weeks and a day*.

"HAMLET"

The duration of the action in this immortal tragedy presents no difficulties whatever, and there is absolutely no room for the meaningless delusion of 'double time.' Yet, Furness and other scholars, imagining a gratuitous puzzle about Hamlet's age, either trip into the 'double time' delusion or advance the absurd suggestion that Shakespeare began to write the play, conceiving Hamlet as a young man, but, having deposited in his mind an abundance of wisdom, experience and mature reflection, finally gave him the age of ripening manhood and expressly indicated it in the gravediggers' scene. Dowden points out difficulties regarding the regulation of the action with reference to time and accepts Professor Hall Griffin's view, that, in reality, "Shakespeare is at fault" and "did not trouble himself to reconcile ... inconsistencies which practical experience

as an actor would tell him do not trouble the spectator." The truth is that the crust of purblind and ingenious misinterpretation which has gathered around the play during these three centuries refracts perception and misleads imagination. No one seems yet to have perceived even the simple art employed by the dramatist in the introduction of the Ghost, and it is my singular misfortune to find that critics, commentators, interpreters, actors and all are groping in the dark and are necessarily strangers to the simple beauty of this superb tragedy. Goethe and Coleridge, Hugo and Swinburne, and a thousand of the world's greatest intellects have struggled hard to take the veil off this masterpiece, and fancied it was removed. But it is still there, and shall be lifted in my forthcoming work, "HAMLET" UNVEILED, and the picture presented in the glory of its genuine beauty and symmetry. Can the kind reader be indulgent for a twelvemonth to the author of "OTHELLO" UNVEILED, little as he is by the side of the great scholars and geniuses who have attempted this task before him?

"MACBETH"

The poet has purposely left no definite hints regarding the duration of the action in this magnificent tragedy. The length of it depends upon the interpretation of the situation and the characters, and the nature of the events with which imagination fills up the intervals. The visible action on the stage proceeds with extreme rapidity.

Acts I and II are closely connected together in point of time. In I. i., the witches meet in 'a desert place' to meet again after the battle is over 'ere the set of sun.' In I. ii., the news of Macbeth's victory is conveyed to the king in *a camp near Forres*, and he orders the instant execution of Cawdor, and sends Ross to Macbeth to confer on him the dignity of 'thane of Cawdor' as 'an earnest of a greater honour.' In I. iii., the witches reassemble, according to prearrangement, on 'a heath,' meet Macbeth and Banquo returning from the battlefield, favour them with predictions and vanish away; and while the generals are conversing about the strange occurrence, Ross and Angus enter to them, and Ross confers the new honour on Macbeth: and all four proceed 'toward the king' to Forres. It is now evening and the king has left the camp and removed to his palace at Forres. I. iv. is the interview with the king *in the palace*, which takes place after a day or two. [This interval is not quite apparent, but there are clear indications of it: e. g., '*late* dignities' (I. vi. 19), 'He hath honoured me *of late*' (I. vii. 32), 'I dreamt *last night* of the three weird sisters' (II. i. 20). Macbeth has meanwhile informed his wife of the supernatural revelations.] At this interview, the king invites himself to Macbeth's castle and starts at once with his train of followers, Macbeth riding in advance: and the last scene (vii.) of Act I takes place on the same night whilst the king is still supping.

Act II begins on the same night, after one o'clock (Fleance has missed to hear the clock)—the moon has set, the stars are dying out, and a storm is gathering. The king is 'abed.' Macbeth sends his servant away and sits musing for a while, then falls into the dagger-soliloquy, and starts off, when the bell rings, to commit the murder. The time is two o'clock; (V. i. 31, 'One: two: why, then 'tis time to do't.') In II. ii., the king has been murdered, and Macbeth and his lady are confused by the repeated sounds of 'knocking' which they hear. The time is a little after two o'clock. [*Note.*—This 'knocking' which confounds the culprits and which Lady Macbeth locates 'at the south entry' has likewise confounded critics and commentators, who miss the subtle art of the dramatist and readily trip into the error of identifying it with the 'knocking,' at the beginning of the next scene, which awakes the porter, and feel puzzled about the efflux of time! The truth is that the 'knocking' which is heard immediately after the murder and for which stage-directions are given at the close of II. ii., is not the 'knocking' at the gate by any *person*, but some other noise or 'knocking'—the noise of something falling and striking against the door or gate on that 'unruly' night, probably, the 'knocking' of the king's horses which 'turned wild in nature, broke their stalls' and 'flung out' 'as they would make war with mankind:' (II. iv. 16-18). Lady Macbeth no doubt finds out her mistake and soothes the agitation in her own and her lord's mind: and both have plenty of time to make themselves at home with the murder, and, indeed, when it is discovered in the morning, Macbeth acts innocence almost to perfection and kills the grooms (in all likelihood, a premeditated act), while Lady Macbeth faints at a very critical moment and saves her lord until the flight of the king's sons saves him completely.] In II. iii., it is already morning and the porter opens the gate after repeated 'knocking' by Macduff and Lennox. The murder is discovered, and the king's sons flee away. In II. iv., the last scene of the Act, which takes place a little later on the same morning, the king's body has been carried to 'Colme-kill for interment; and Macbeth is already named for the throne and 'gone to Scone to be invested.'

[*A long interval is indicated* at the close of Act II (the words, 'Thou hast it now,' III. i. 1, do not necessarily imply a short interval), which permits the peaceful accession and reign of the new monarch in spite of latent suspicions and disaffection, the gradual growth of the feeling of insecurity in Macbeth's mind, the degeneration of his character, his attempts to win Malcolm into his power (IV. iii. 117-9), his tyranny and cruelty (III. vi. 48-9; IV. iii. 5-8, 37-41, 55-7, 164-73), the general disaffection and terror in the country, etc.]

Act III commences after the interval. III. i. takes place in the afternoon, a few hours before the banquet. Banquo is murdered at nightfall (III. iii.) and after the banquet is over, Macbeth speaks of consulting the witches the next morning (III. iv. 132).

Act IV. i., the cave-scene with the 'cauldron boiling' takes place on the next morning; Macbeth receives intelligence of the future from the

witches' masters. At the close of the scene, he hears of Macduff's flight to England, and resolves on the instant surprise of his castle and the slaughter of his wife and children: which is done in the next scene, IV. ii. In IV. iii., we have the interview (after a short interval) between Malcolm and Macduff at the English court, and Ross, who has likewise fled from the cruelty of the tyrant, arrives and informs Macduff of the sad fate of his wife and children. We learn, too, that old Siward is ready to set forth with ten thousand men, and Malcolm proposes to go to the king at once and obtain his permission for marching out. (IV. iii. 236-7).

Act V commences after a short interval. The Scottish nobles learn that Malcolm is coming with his English troops and desert their tyrant king. The action proceeds briskly and leads to the conclusion.

"KING LEAR"

The events depicted in this sublime tragedy take place in close consecution, there being but one long interval in their course. This interval—of a fortnight's duration—which occurs before the king's breach with his eldest daughter and his departure from her home, is introduced in two halves, immediately *before* and *after* the short scene between Goneril and her steward (I. iii.) The lapse of time *before* I. iii. is quite plain from Goneril's references therein to her father's continued wrongs on her and her men, and to the roitous behaviour of his knights, as well as from the determination she expresses not to 'endure' it any longer, and the instructions she gives to her steward:

"When he returns from hunting
I will not speak with him; say I am sick:—
If you come slack of former services,
You shall do well; the fault of it I'll answer. [*Horns heard.*
Osw. He's coming, madam; I hear him.
Gon. Put on what weary negligence you please,
You and your fellows; I'd have it come to question."

And again—

"And let his knights have colder looks among you;
What grows of it, no matter; advise your fellows so:
I would breed from hence occasions, and I shall,
That I may speak:—I'll write straight to my sister,
To hold my course.—Prepare for dinner."

The interval *after* this scene is artfully disguised so as to create the impression of continuity in dramatic time, and the next scene, I. iv., (in which the king and his knights return from hunting, *horns are heard,* and the king calls for the immediate service of *dinner*) appears as if it were a continuation—which it is *not*—of I. iii. The incidents referred to in I. iv. are of a morning, some seven or eight days subsequent to that on which the conversation in I. iii., between Goneril and her steward had taken

place. During the interval between these two mornings, Oswald and his fellows, following their lady's instructions (I. iii.) slacked their attentions on the King and his knights by no imperceptible degrees, and Goneril herself 'bandied hasty words' with her father, 'grudged his pleasures,' and 'scanted his sizes.' (II. iv.) On the morning to which I. iv. relates, the neglect has become so unbearable that one of the knights remarks: "My lord, I know not what the matter is: but, to my judgment, your highness is not entertained with that ceremonious affection as you were wont; there's a great abatement of kindness appears, as well in the general dependants, as in the duke himself also, and your daughter." The King himself says, "I have perceived a most faint neglect of late;" and the conversation which presently takes place between him and his daughter settles his departure from her home. The suggestion—which, being evidently the subject of a loud discussion among the servants outside, reaches the King's ears between his exit after the imprecation on Goneril and his re-entry—that he might continue his stay with fifty followers, brings out an angry exclamation from him, which marks the time that has elapsed from the commencement:

> "What! fifty of my followers at a clap!
> Within a fortnight!"

[Many critics raise an objection, on the score of *improbability*, to the existence of rumours, so early as a fortnight after the partition of the kingdom, of a division and likely war between the Dukes of Albany and Cornwall (II. i. and III. i.); as also to the early arrival of a French army and the battle which follows. (III. i., iii., vii.) The objection vanishes when the situation at the opening of the drama is correctly grasped, and it is noted that Kent, Gloster, Cordelia and the King of France must have quite anticipated almost immediate trouble to the old father, and decided upon a secret watch and the location of a secret force, as also upon prompt action on the very first signs of trouble. It should be noted, too, that the succession to the throne after King Lear had doubtless been the subject of speculation and ambition for a long time past, and secret jealousy and ill-will had established itself between the houses of the two married daughters. The King was by many supposed to be in favour of the Duke of Albany (I. i.); but, evidently, to prevent disputes after his death, he decided on a peaceful settlement—the trifurcation of his kingdom among his three daughters—even during his life-time, giving 'a third more opulent' than her sisters' shares to his favourite child, Cordelia, in whose house he wished to pass the remainder of his days, 'setting his rest on her kind nursery.' A fatal whim, however, suddenly changed the whole plan of the King and led to a huge catastrophe.]

"JULIUS CÆSAR"

The simple art employed by Shakespeare to disguise intervals of time in his dramas, so to create an apparent continuity in the action, has created puzzles to scholars and commentators regarding the duration of the action in this tragedy, and driven them to seek refuge in the legerdemain of 'double time.' They point out that the scenes of the first three Acts are so closely connected together in point of time that "there is no room for even short intervals" and not more than *a single day's* duration can be discovered, though there is clear indication, on the other hand, that between the commencement of the drama and the end of Act III *a whole month* is covered—from the Ides (13th) of February, when the feast of Lupercal was celebrated, to the Ides (15th) of March, the day of Cæsar's assassination. They seem to be equally at a loss to find any room for the long period which must necessarily elapse before the preparations of war, referred to in Act IV, and the battle which takes place in Act V. A little close inspection, however, suffices to dispel the difficulty and the delusion.

Act I. i. and ii. take place on the same day—the Ides (13th) of February. In I. i., the citizens of Rome are going about the streets, 'making holiday, to see Cæsar and rejoice in his triumph' and it is the day of the feast of Lupercal. In I. ii., the procession with Cæsar at the head proceeds to the festival and returns, and Cæsar receives the warning from the soothsayer—"Beware the Ides of March." Cassius takes Brutus apart and enters into a conversation with him regarding the dangerous growth of Cæsar's power, and Casca presently joins them: and they depart, agreeing to meet again *on the next day*—Casca to dine with Cassius, and Cassius to see Brutus at his house. I. ii. closes with the soliloquy of Cassius, which gives an insight into the methods he proposes to adopt to bring round Brutus to his view:

> "I will this night,
> In several hands, in at his windows throw,
> As if they came from several citizens,
> Writings, all tending to the great opinion
> That Rome holds of his name; wherein obscurely
> Cæsar's ambition shall be glancèd at:
> And, after this, let Cæsar seat him sure;
> For we will shake him, or worse days endure."

[*An interval of nearly a month* elapses before we get to I. iii. Cassius had no doubt thrown a number of anonymous letters in at Brutus' windows, both on the night of the 13th February, and *often* on other nights: (II. i. 49-50). He had also met Brutus several times and discussed the situation with him and almost won him over. He had likewise enlisted the sympathy of others and the conspiracy was mature, though, evidently, it was not a perfect secret (Cicero and some others had doubtless a smell of it, and Artemidorus knew the very names of the conspirators).]

I. iii. takes place on the night of the 14th March. It is a heavy, tempestuous night. Cicero and Casca meet in the street (they were walking about, in spite of the weather, to watch the movements of the conspiracy they had scented). Casca grows breathless with fear at the sight of the Senator, who asks him (sarcastically) whether he had been escorting Cæsar home. Casca evades the question and talks about the terrible tempest that was blowing, and the portents and prodigies which had been witnessed of late: and presently parts company. Casca continues to wander about and, after some interval, meets Cassius who wins him to the 'enterprise of honourable-dangerous consequence,' to which he had already moved 'some certain of the noblest-minded Romans.' Cinna joins them, and, amongst other things, is enjoined by Cassius to throw a letter (which he gives) in at Brutus' window and to repair to Pompey's theatre whither he was going to meet the other conspirators before going to Brutus. The time is just 'after midnight' and the scene closes.

"Let us go
For it is after midnight; and, ere day,
We will awake him, and be sure of him." [I. e. Brutus.]

[*Note.*—The interval between I. ii. and I iii. has been artistically disguised by the dramatist by creating an *apparent* link between Cæsar's return home and Cassius' anonymous letters (I. ii.) and the same circumstances (of a later time), alluded to at the beginning and the end of I. iii.]

Act II commences about a couple of hours after the close of Act I, that is, about 2-30 a. m. on the Ides (15th) of March. In II. i., Brutus' boy hands him a letter just found in the window, which was not there when he went to bed. Cassius and other conspirators presently enter, the compact is made, and they depart about 3 a. m. Then follows the conversation between Brutus and Portia, which is interrupted for a few minutes by the arrival of Ligarius, and is evidently resumed after he is sent away. The remaining scenes, ii., iii., and iv. of Act II take place between 6 and 9 on the same morning.

Act III. i. witnesses the assassination of Julius Cæsar in the Capitol between 9 and 10 a. m. on the same morning, the Ides (15th) of March. (The tumult and confusion which ensues is left to imagination.) III. ii., in which we hear Brutus' speech to the people and Antony's funeral oration, is a picture of the afternoon. [*Note.*—1. Brutus and Cassius, having found it impossible to restore the mob to order and get it for immediate audience, had 'enrolled the question' of Cæsar's death in the Capitol, and Antony was able to learn from it the keynote of Brutus' speech—that 'Cæsar was ambitious.' 2. After arranging for the conveyance of Cæsar's body 'to the market-place,' Antony ran to Cæsar's house and got the will from his casket.] After the close of Antony's oration, about 4 or 5 p. m., we learn that Octavius Cæsar (about whom the information at 11 a. m. was that he lay 'to-night'—the night just ended—'within seven leagues of Rome') is already arrived in Rome, and 'he and Lepidus are at Cæsar's house;' and Antony proposes to go straight

to them for a conference. There is news, too, that 'Brutus and Cassius are rid like madmen through the gates of Rome.' Act III. iii., which depicts the fate of Cinna the poet, occurs on the same evening.

[*A long interval follows* at the close of Act III. Antony must have gone to Octavius and Lepidus, *at Cæsar's house*, on the evening of the Ides of March (as indicated at the close of III. ii.) and all three must have discussed the situation, and met, too, several times afterwards: but we are not told what transpired at these meetings, nor how affairs went on. Everything is left to our imagination.]

Act IV. i. takes place *at Antony's house*, quite a long time after Cæsar's assassination. The triumvirs are in consultation, preparing the proscription list and proposing to concert measures to meet Brutus and Cassius, who, they learn, 'are levying powers outside Rome.'

[*Another long interval* is implied between IV. i. and IV. ii. Octavius and Antony having made themselves quite strong, Portia despaired of her husband's success and committed suicide. The proscriptions were carried into effect, and Cicero and others put to death.]

IV. ii. witnesses the meeting of Brutus and Cassius, before Brutus' tent in the camp near Sardis. Misunderstandings had arisen between the two leaders, which are however settled in the conference which takes place in IV. iii. Brutus has received letters from Rome, that Octavius and Antony were marching 'with a mighty power, bending their expedition toward Philippi.' Brutus and Cassius finally agree to march with their forces to Philippi to meet the enemy and they start before daybreak. During the night, Brutus sees the Ghost of Cæsar in his tent.

[*A short interval* is implied here for the march to Philippi, and Brutus sees the Ghost of Cæsar for the second time, in Philippi fields, on the night before the battle.]

Act V witnesses the battle of Philippi. It takes place on Cassius' birthday, and both he and Brutus breathe their last.

"TIMON OF ATHENS"

In this famous tragedy of the Athenian misanthrope, the period which elapses from the commencement of the drama to the close is purposely left indefinite, so as to give scope for the vicissitudes in the fortunes and condition of the hero. Act I reveals Timon at the pinnacle of prosperity, surrounded by lords and flatterers who are constantly treated to sumptuous feasts and favoured with costly presents. Poets, painters, jewellers, merchants, and everyone, rich and poor, gather around the munificent millionaire and adore him to reap the rich fruits of his boundless bounty. Banquets, entertainments, music, dancing, hunting and other diversions follow close upon one another, and everything around is bright and cheerful. Act II necessarily begins after a long interval. Timon has contracted heavy debts, but is still pursuing his reckless career, giving no heed to the repeated remonstrances of his faithful steward. All his estates have

been mortgaged, some have been forfeited and lost, and the remainder can but cover half the debts. The millionaire's credit has fallen, bills have been long overdue, the senators and other creditors press for payment of their debts, and he applies to his friends for loans to meet the pressing demands. Act III begins, in point of time, close upon the heels of Act II. Timon's friends disappoint and desert him, demands grow, and there is an end to feasting and hunting. Creditors call on him every day, he is obliged to avoid them, gets up late from bed, and seldom goes out. He grows sour-tempered and finally falls foul of the bill-collectors. The Act concludes with the banishment of Alcibidias, and the mock banquet of 'smoking dishes' after which the impoverished prodigal turns his back on Athens for ever. Act IV finds Timon without the walls of Athens, pronouncing his imprecation upon the city and its people. He proceeds to the woods and lives in a cave. IV. iii., in which he finds gold, necessarily takes place after a long interval, for we find the banished Alcibidias returning at the head of a large army to wreak his vengeance on Athens, and Timon's health has decayed (IV. iii. 438) and the Senators who banished Alcibidias are dead (V. v. 26, 27). The visits of Apemantus and others, which follow, disclose further lapses of time. Act V begins after a further interval and leads on to the time of Timon's death.

The intervals between the several Acts as well as those between the scenes are clear enough in most places, though the exact length cannot be determined. In two or three places, however, the art which the dramatist has employed to disguise the intervals has created interesting time-puzzles.

1. The interval between I. i. and ii. is disguised by the apparent link created between the *close* of I. i. and the *commencement* of I. ii. A little while before the close of I. i., Timon had sent a sum of five talents to release his friend Ventidius from imprisonment and requested him to go over to his house, immediately after he was set at liberty:

> "Commend me to him: I will send his ransom;
> And, being enfranchis'd, bid him come to me."

At the close of the scene, Timon stops his visitors—the poet and others, as well as Apemantus—for dinner. Alcibidias arrives with his Company, and Lords likewise join the dinner. I. ii., which begins with a great banquet in Timon's house, at which Alcibidias, Lords, Senators, Apemantus, and *Ventidius* are present, creates the impression that this banquet is the same as the one to which reference is made at the close of I. i., which, of course, it is not. The banquet in I. ii. takes place a long time after that in I. i., and Ventidius, having grown rich by his father's death, offers to return (though Timon declines to receive) 'those talents, doubled with thanks and service,' from whose help he had derived his liberty.

2. In II. ii., Timon returns late from his morning hunt (it is past noon), and he expresses his intention to go out a-hunting after dinner. But he is pestered by the servants of his creditors who will not be put off even till the next morning. The steward, however, begs them to 'cease their importunancy till after dinner,' and Timon, ordering them to be 'well

entertained,' withdraws to dine with his friends and lords: but, evidently, he gives up all idea of the afternoon hunt, and the guests stay with Timon and take leave of him after nightfall: (l. 156.). All this is shut off from our view, but it is clear that the conversation between Apemantus, the Fool, and the creditors' men, as well as the dialogue between Timon and his steward, takes place a long while after the return from the hunt, and is subsequent to the departure of the guests. Timon then despatches three several servants to Lucius, Lucullus, and Sempronius, requesting an urgent loan of fifty talents from each. He likewise sends a man to Ventidius, who had lately stepped into a great estate by his father's death, 'craving to be remember'd with those five talents' he had cleared him with 'when he was poor, imprison'd and in scarcity of friends.'

3. A nice time-puzzle is presented in Act III, scenes i., ii., iii. of which give us the interviews of Timon's servants with Lucullus, Lucius, and Sempronius. We naturally assume that these interviews take place on the same night, viz., the night which witnessed the close of the preceding scene (II. ii.), but are confronted with incongruous assertions.

(*a*) Lucullus' *aside* at the beginning of III. i.—"One of Lord Timon's men? a gift, I warrant. Why, this hits right; I dreamt of a silver basin and ewer *to-night*."

(*b*) Timon's man curses Lucullus at the close of III. i. and exclaims:

"Has friendship such a faint and milky heart,
It turns *in less than two nights?*"

(*c*) In III. ii., the *First Stranger* tells Lucius that he had already heard *common rumours* that 'Lord Timon's happy hours are done and past, and his estate shrinks from him' and the *Second Stranger* tells him that '*not long ago*, one of his (Timon's) men was with the Lord Lucullus to borrow *so many* talents; nay, urged extremely for 't, and showed what necessity belonged to 't, and *yet was denied*.' Now, the existence of the 'common rumours' and the knowledge of the *Second Stranger* indicate that some days have elapsed since the time of Lucullus' denial; yet, how have the 'common rumours' escaped the ears of Lucius, and why does he not believe them even when the information is given him. Again, the words 'so many' indicate that the number was signified by the fingers of the hand (the interpretation that 'so many' is idiomatically used to denote 'as many as will supply his present occasion' is altogether unsatisfactory) and must be *not more than ten*, whereas the loan that we know was denied by Lucullus was one of *fifty* talents. If III. ii. takes place on the same night as III. i., how does the *Second Stranger* (who was not present at the time) know what transpired in III. i., and so soon? If it takes place on a later day, how is it that Lucius is ignorant of what the *Second Stranger* has learnt, and is evidently the topic of common talk?

(*d*) The servant who goes to Sempronius in III. iii. does so after a delay which is unaccountable, and besides knows the result of Timon's applications to Lucullus, Lucius, and Ventidius, for he tells Sempronius that 'they have all been touch'd, and found base metal,' having refused the loan.

The above puzzles (*a*), (*b*), (*c*), and (*d*) are, however, only *apparent*, being created by the subtle art of the dramatist, which disguises the interval, leaving imagination to supply the incidents which should make everything natural and true to life. What, then, are the solutions of the puzzles? [Does not the discovery of this subtle art, which is peculiar to Shakespeare and is employed by him in so many other plays, refute the opinion, generally entertained by scholars, that Act III of this drama was the work of some other writer?]

The solution of (*a*) and (*b*) is as follows: Immediately after returning from the hunt, Lucullus excused himself from dinner and went home. Timon tells Flaminius whom he despatches to Lucullus—" I have *hunted* (not *dined*) with his honour to-day.' Flaminius cannot see the lord that very night—he has already gone to bed—and when he goes to him the next morning (III. i.), the mean nobleman hopes that he is going to get 'a silver basin and ewer' of which he has been dreaming *to-night*—the night just ended. So, too, Flaminius' words, '*less than two nights*' aptly refer to the last meal of Lucullus at Timon's table, viz., his supper of the night before last.

The solution of (*c*) is as follows: Servilius whom Timon sends to Lucius at the close of II. ii. sees him the very night, and is able to get from him a small loan of five talents instead of the fifty applied for. III. ii. does not describe this first interview of Servilius with Lucius, but one of a very much later date. During the interim, Timon's position has grown worse and worse, he had repeatedly applied to friends for smaller and smaller sums, rumours have been afloat about his insolvent condition, and Lucius has no doubt heard of them as well as of the unsuccessful applications for loans. But he pretends not to have heard anything, and even supports Timon's credit, for he is interested in doing so, having foolishly lent him five talents, which he must now somehow manage to get back. In III. ii., Timon's man—Servilius—goes to Lucius for the second time and can evidently solicit only a small loan of *so many* (shown with the fingers of the hand) talents—very likely five. Lucius pretends to think it a joke and says that Timon cannot really want (*i. e.*, can surely show in his possession) even fifty-five hundred talents. (He could say nothing else, nor speak about the five talents he had lent, before the *Strangers* to whom he had just praised Timon's credit.) When Servilius tells him seriously that Timon is really pinched for the small sum, Lucius feels quite sorry that he had but the other day spent away all his moneys, and was indeed himself 'sending to use Lord Timon'—which is true, for he was thinking of soliciting the return of the five talents recently lent. He does not however omit the demand of this loan of five talents (equivalent to 'five thousand crowns'); for, not many days after, we find his servant amongst the men waiting at Timon's house with their several demands: (III. iv. 29, 89.) It may be noted here that the words of the *Second Stranger*—"not long ago, one of his (Timon's) men was with the Lord Lucullus to borrow *so many* talents" (III. ii.)—evidently refer to a second or third application for a small loan of not more than ten talents.

Lastly, the solution of (*d*) is as follows: Sempronius, on his own admission, was 'the first man that ever received gift from Timon' and was doubtless passing as the best of the friends. He was Timon's 'best hope' (III. iii. 34) and even Flavius—Timon's faithful steward—seems to entertain a hope of getting help from him, for he pooh-poohs only the idea of soliciting loans from Lucius and Lucullus—(II. ii. 184). Sempronius, however, is the cunningest of the three false friends. Timon's man—the poet purposely omits to give the name—does see the lord on the night (II. ii.) on which his help is first solicited, but is bribed to report that the friend had, on a sudden and urgent call, just left the city and would not be returning for some days. And the lord actually leaves the city before day-break and returns after several days' absence, when the rumours of Timon's insolvency have become quite open and there would be little fear of being bothered for a loan or being blamed for refusing it! Timon's servant who goes to Sempronius in III. iii. is not the same man that was sent at the close of II. ii. Of course, he does not reveal the fact of the lord having been sought, once or twice before in his absence, nor, until the topic turns up, that Lucius, Lucullus, and Ventidius had disappointed his master and Sempronius was the 'last refuge.' This servant of Timon's is evidently attached to him and soliloquises in a touching strain about the 'politic love' and villanous ingratitude of Sempronius and the utter helplessness to which his master is reduced:

"Of such a nature is his politic love.
This was my lord's best hope; now all are fled,
Save the gods only: now his friends are dead,
Doors, that were ne'er acquainted with their wards
Many a bounteous year, must be employ'd
Now to guard sure their master.
And this is all a liberal course allows,
Who cannot keep his wealth must keep his house."

Thus has the master-artist depicted with wonderful fidelity to life and truth, different characters among false friends and among servants: and the subtle art employed to disguise the interval and create an apparent continuity in time serves likewise to furnish a background for the picture which otherwise must be marred by dull and plain monotony.

"ROMEO AND JULIET"

The duration of the action in this most touching tragedy is indicated almost with mathematical precision. The drama opens a short while before 9 o'clock on Sunday morning and closes before dawn on Saturday following, thus extending the incidents over a period of nearly *six* days.

Romeo and Juliet are married by Friar Laurence on Monday afternoon (III. iv. 18; II. iv. 162-5; II. vi.); Mercutio and Tybalt are killed in the fray which takes place an hour later, and Romeo is exiled from Verona,

immediately after: (III. i. 180). On the same (Monday) night, Capulet promises his daughter Juliet's hand to Paris and decides that she shall be married to him on Thursday morning: (III. iv. 20 ff. III. v. 111). Romeo bids farewell to Juliet at dawn on Tuesday (III. v.) and departs to Mantua. Soon afterwards, Juliet's parents announce to her that she is to have Count Paris for her husband and the marriage is to take place ' early next Thursday morn: (III. v. 111 ff.) Juliet goes to Frair Laurence, leaving a message to her mother through the Nurse; (III. v. 229-231):

> " Go in, and tell my lady I am gone,
> Having displeased my father, to Laurence ' cell,
> To make confession and to be absolved."

It is Tuesday morning, as we have noted. At Friar Laurence' cell, Juliet meets Paris who makes advances to her, which she repels: (IV. i. 18-40). That same morning Juliet obtains the sleeping potion: (IV. i. 89-120).

> " Hold, then; go home, be merry, give consent
> To marry Paris: Wednesday is to-morrow;
> To-morrow night look that thou lie alone,
> Let not thy nurse lie with thee in thy chamber:
> Take thou this vial, being then in bed,
> And this distilled liquor drink thou off:
> When presently through all thy veins shall run
> A cold and drowsy humour; for no pulse
> Shall keep his native progress, but surcease:
> No warmth, no breath, shall testify thou livest;
> The roses in thy lips and cheeks shall fade
> To paly ashes; thy eyes' windows fall,
> Like death, when he shuts up the day of life;
> Each part, deprived of supple government,
> Shall, stiff and stark and cold, appear like death:
> And *in this borrow'd likeness of shrunk death*
> *Thou shalt continue two and forty hours,*
> And then awake as from a pleasant sleep.
> Now, when the bridegroom in the morning comes
> To rouse thee from thy bed, there art thou dead:
> Then, as the manner of our country is,
> In thy best robes uncover'd on the bier
> Thou shalt be borne to that same ancient vault
> Where all the kindred of the Capulets lie.
> In the mean time, against thou shalt awake,
> Shall Romeo by my letters know our drift;
> And hither shall he come: and he and I
> *Will watch thy waking*, and that very *night*
> Shall Romeo bear thee hence to Mantua.
> And this shall free thee from this present shame,
> If no inconstant toy nor womanish fear
> Abate thy valour in the acting it."

So far there is no difficulty, but after it we are confronted with a double puzzle.

(*a*) Juliet gets the sleeping potion from the Friar and returns home on *Tuesday morning* (IV. i.). In IV. ii., even as Capulet enquires if Juliet has gone to the Friar, and the Nurse answers, 'Ay, forsooth' (ll. 11-12), she returns from shrift 'with a merry look,' and the father, quite pleased with her reformation, talks of the marriage which is to take place the next day—'*to-morrow morning*' (l. 24). And Juliet requests the Nurse to go to the closet to help her to 'sort such needful ornaments' as would be fit for '*to-morrow*'—(ll. 33-5). The puzzle arises, If Juliet has just returned from shrift and it is *Tuesday morning*, how could 'to-morrow' be Thursday on which the marriage is to take place? and how do we get into *night*, so soon, for, a minute later, Lady Capulet says, ''Tis now *near night*,' (IV. ii. 39)? On this, Malone finds fault with Shakespeare:—"In III. v., Romeo parted from his bride at daybreak on *Tuesday* morning. *Immediately afterwards*, she went to Friar Laurence, and he particularly mentions (IV. i. 90) that the next day is Wednesday. She could not well have remained more than an hour or two with the Friar, and she is just now returned from shrift; yet Lady Capulet says, ''Tis near *night*,' and this same night is ascertained to be *Tuesday*. This is one of the many instances of Shakespeare's inaccuracy in the computation of time." Ulrici applauds the fault-finder:—"Malone is perfectly right, and would never have made such a mistake;—but Shakespeare, marry, was no Malone." [No, to be sure; neither was he Ulrici!] And the Cowden-Clarkes come to the rescue as the faithful apostles of the 'double time' theory:—"In scene v of Act III comes the parting of the lovers at the dawn of Tuesday, and when, at the close of the scene, Juliet says she shall repair to Friar Laurence' cell. Act IV commences with her appearance there, thus carrying on the action during the same day, Tuesday. But the effect of long time is introduced by the mention of '*evening* mass,' and by the Friar's detailed directions and reference to 'to-morrow's night;' so that when the mind has been prepared by the change of scene, by Capulet's anxious preparations for the wedding, and by Juliet's return to filial submission, there seems no violence done to the imagination by Lady Capulet's remarking, ''Tis now near night.' Nay, it is one of Shakespeare's expedients in dramatic time for bringing on the period of the catastrophe; for Juliet retires to her own room with the intention of selecting wedding attire for the next morning, anticipating it by a whole day—Wednesday instead of Thursday—thus naturally preparing for the immediate sequence of the incidents in the remainder of Act IV." Must we indeed swallow this!

(*b*) Then, Maginn is puzzled about the arithmetic of the sleeping potion! Says he: "Is there not some mistake in the length of time that the sleeping draught is to occupy, if we consider the text of the Frair's speech as it now stands to be correct? [See IV. i. 105, 'Thou shalt continue two and forty hours.'] Juliet retires to bed on Tuesday night at a somewhat early hour. Her mother says, after she departs, ''Tis now near night.'

Say it is eleven o'clock : forty-two hours from that hour bring us to five o' clock in the evening of Thursday : and yet we find the time of her awakening fixed in profound darkness, and not long before the dawn. We should allow at least ten hours more, and read, '*two and fifty* hours,' which would fix her awakening at three o' clock in the morning, a time which has been marked in a former scene as the approach of day. In IV. iv. 4, Capulet says, ' 'tis three o' clook.' Immediately after [IV. iv. 21] he says, 'Good faith, 'tis day.' This observation may appear superfluously minute, but those who take the pains of reading the play critically will find that it is dated throughout with a most exact attention to hours. We can time almost every event."

But Maginn, Malone, the Cowden-Clarkes, and Ulrici—all alike have failed to perceive the real art and arithmetic which the master-dramatist has employed here. Let us proceed to discover it.

1. The poet has artistically disguised an interval of a whole day between scenes i. and ii. of Act IV., leaving us to imagine what transpired in that interval. At the close IV. i., Juliet bids farewell to Friar Laurence and returns home; it is *Tuesday* morning. The next scene, IV. ii., is taken, (*not* from that day's life but) from Wednesday's, when Juliet returns from shrift on the evening of that day. The circumstances which are common to both the visits, viz., the Nurse's report about it [III. v. 229-30 ; IV. ii. 12], the meeting with Paris, and Juliet's repenting the sin of filial disobedience, create an *apparent* link between them, and make us fancy the shrift from which Juliet returns in IV. ii. is the same as that referred to in IV. i., though in reality they are *different*. In IV. ii., which takes place on *Wednesday evening*, Lord and Lady Capulet, the Nurse, and the servants are all busy with arrangements for the event of the next morning. We may well fancy that Paris had called at Capulet's house that morning or on Tuesday evening and gently hinted the indifferent manner in which Juliet had received him at the Friar's on Tuesday morning, and it is clear that Juliet's visit to the Friar on Wednesday evening proceeded from the suggestion of the anxious old father (IV. ii. 31-2) ; and Paris' meeting his bride—which was accidental on Tuesday morning—was doubtless pre-designed on Wednesday evening. It should be noted that, while in III. v. it is the Nurse that is to give information about Juliet's departure to the Friar's, in IV. ii. it is Lord Capulet that makes the enquiry (*not* if Juliet has returned from, but) if she has gone to the Friar's (evidently in obedience to advice given). It is noteworthy, too, that Juliet's conduct towards Paris on Wednesday evening (IV. ii. 25-7) was more conciliatory than on Tuesday morn (IV. i. 18-36). Now, Juliet returns from shrift on *Wednesday evening*, just before nightfall : her welcome words of filial obedience and her report of her conduct towards Paris (IV. ii. 17-20 ; 25-7) that evening at the Friar's so delight the old father, he would at once send for the County, and he even bids the Nurse go 'fetch him hither :' but Lady Capulet is in no hurry to get the lover there before the actual day—Thursday—which is close at hand ; and she stops the Nurse from going. The dialogues at this point cross

each other and their mutual reference should be carefully noted.

> "*Jul.* I met the youthful lord at Laurence' cell,
> And gave him what becomed love I might,
> Not stepping o'er the bounds of modesty.
> *Cap.* Why, I am glad on 't; this is well; stand up:
> This is as 't should be.—Let me see the county;
> Ay, marry, go, I say, and fetch him hither.—
> Now afore God, this reverend holy friar,
> All our holy city is much bound to him.
> *Jul.* Nurse, will you go with me into my closet,
> To help me sort such needful ornaments
> As you think fit to furnish me to-morrow?
> *La. Cap.* No, not till Thursday; there is time enough.
> *Cap.* Go, nurse, go with her:—we 'll to church to-morrow.
> [*Exeunt Juliet and Nurse.*
> *La. Cap.* We shall be short in our provision.
> 'Tis now near night."

Lady Capulet's words, "No, not till Thursday; there is time enough" are not addressed to Juliet, but to her husband and the Nurse. The situation is as follows: Lord Capulet bids the Nurse go 'fetch' the County; Juliet, disliking the idea of her lover coming there, requests the Nurse to help her in the sorting of ornaments for the morrow's wedding; Lady Capulet, too, does not like the idea of the lover being sent for; the Nurse does not know whom to obey; and Lord Capulet revokes his command and bids the Nurse go help the daughter.

Thus, the whole mystery about the '*near night*' vanishes like mist, leaving us to exclaim with Ulrici—"Shakespeare, marry, was no Malone!"

2. Next, as to the arithmetical error which Maginn would rectify. Unfortunately for the learned critic, the error is his own, not Shakespeare's. No doubt, the Friar tells Juliet when he describes the virtues of the sleeping draught, "And in this borrow'd likeness of shrunk death thou shalt continue two and forty hours," but it is a mistake to understand him to mean two and forty hours *from the moment of swallowing the draught.* Neither the Friar nor Juliet, we may assume, is such a dull arithmetician as not to be able to know (and it is most natural both of them should calculate it in their minds) that two and forty hours from Wednesday night (when she is told to drink the potion) will time her awakening to a most unsuitable hour—on Friday evening. It is quite clear that the Friar expects the awakening to come off *at night*, that he and and Romeo may watch, and that Romeo may bear her off, after she wakes up, to Mantua.'

> "And hither shall he come: and he and I
> Will *watch* thy waking, and *that very night*
> Shall Romeo bear thee hence to Mantua."

And it is clear, too,—and the Friar expressly mentions it—that the two and forty hours count from the time when "THIS *borrowed likeness of*

shrunk death" has completely supervened. Surely, the Friar does not profess to give the girl any magic potion which possesses the power of inducing sleep, loss of pulse, coldness, pallor, stiffness of limbs, and the full appearance of death—all in a minute! These symptoms, which the Friar describes, are evidently to supervene gradually and one after another, and become established by the time the bridegroom arrives in the morning: otherwise, there would be no necessity for Juliet to drink the potion on Wednesday night instead of on Thursday morning when she is roused from her bed. The Friar's words—

> "And in THIS *borrowed likeness of shrunk death*
> Thou shalt continue two and forty hours,
> And then awake as from a pleasant sleep"—

leave no doubt that his calculation is from the morning, when the death-likeness he describes shall have been completely borrowed. And two and forty hours from Thursday morning would bring the awakening about midnight on Friday—a most convenient time for Romeo and the Friar to 'watch' and for Romeo to carry off his bride to Mantua, under cover of night. The timing of the incidents is as follows:—

IV. iii. takes place about 11 o'clock on Wednesday night and Juliet drinks the potion. [Maginn's arithmetic is evidently confined to accuracy in *hours*, for he coolly assumes that Juliet drinks the potion on *Tuesday* night, instead of on Wednesday night as directed by the Friar (IV. i. 90-1).]

IV. iv. is a short scene, but being one of business and hurly-burly behind the scenes (Lord and Lady Capulet, the Nurse and servants are all watching and busy with preparations for the next morning), it extends over a considerable portion of the night—almost from midnight till dawn. We are not allowed to see all that takes place, and must necessarily understand an *interval* after the Nurse says, "They call for dates and quinces in the pastry" and before Lord Capulet makes his appearance and says, "The curfew bell hath rung, *'tis three o'clock.*" So also, *another interval* must be understood before the servants enter '*with spits, logs, and baskets,*' which takes place about dawn, for Capulet remarks—

> "Good faith, *'tis day:*
> The county will be here with music straight."

Indeed, music is heard presently and the County is come. [Thus, Maginn is not correct in supposing that the conversations in IV. iv. mark *three o' clock* as the approach of day.]

IV. v. commences on Thursday morning, between 6 and 7 o' clock. Juliet is found dead—'dead the night before the wedding day,' (IV. v. 35), disclosing in the morning all the 'borrowed likeness of shrunk death:'

> "She 's cold;
> Her blood is settled and her joints are stiff;
> Life and these lips have long been separated."

[Juliet is laid in 'Capels' monument' on Friday afternoon, and Romeo's servant, Balthasar, takes post immediately after, and rides to Mantua.]

V. i. witnesses the communication of the lamentable news to Romeo. It takes place on Friday night at about 7 o' clock, and both Romeo and Balthasar take post in an hour's time and set out for Verona; and they reach the churchyard about a half past eleven on that same night. The Friar goes to the monument about half an hour later (V. iii. 120), and Juliet begins to stir, and presently awakes. It is about midnight. The coming of the watchmen, their search in the churchyard, the message to the Prince, the Capulets, and the Montagues, and their arrival one after another—all these incidents necessarily take up time and create intervals which extend the scene into the early hours of the morning: (V. iii. 304).

"THE TEMPEST"

The poet himself speaks through Alonso of the 'strange maze' presented by the incidents of this fascinating comedy, and promises through Prospero to resolve it 'at pick'd leisure:'

> "*Alon.* This is as strange a maze as e'er men trod;
> And there is in this business more than nature
> Was ever conduct of: some oracle
> Must rectify our knowledge.
> *Pros.* Sir, my liege,
> Do not infest your mind with beating on
> The strangeness of this business: at pick'd leisure,
> Which shall be shortly, single I 'll resolve you
> (Which to you shall seem probable) of every
> These happen'd accidents."

But, to our great disappointment, the curtain falls just as Prospero and his guests enter the cell, and we are denied the privilege of listening to the discourse with which the host enlivens the entertainment. And we are left to 'beat on the strangeness of the business' with our own brains.

Critics have fancied that the whole action of the drama takes place within the space of some three hours, because Alonso says to Ferdinand, when at last they are brought together, "Your eld'st acquaintance cannot be *three hours*:" and so, his words to Prospero—

> "If thou be 'st Prospero,
> Give us particulars of thy preservation;
> How thou hast met us here, who *three hours* since
> Were wreck'd upon this shore:"

and the Boatswain says—

> "The best news is, that we have safely found
> Our king and company: the next, our ship—
> Which, but *three glasses* since, we gave out split—
> Is tight and yare, and bravely rigg'd, as when
> We first put out to sea."

The Cowden-Clarkes point out that *four hours* is the time occupied by the whole action, for in I. ii., Prospero asks Ariel, " What is the time o'the day ?" and when the answer is given, " Past the mid season," rejoins—

" At least two glasses. The time 'twixt six and now
Must by us both be spent most preciously"—

which seems to appropriate *four hours* for the working of Prospero's spells and the carrying out of his plans. So, the conversation between Prospero and Ariel at the commencement of Act V seems to indicate that the time has almost elapsed, and 'Prospero's schemes are on the eve of their final accomplishment :'

" *Pros.* How's the day ?
Ari. On the sixth hour ; at which time, my lord,
You said our work should cease.
Pros. I did say so,
When first I rais'd the tempest."

The puzzle remains, however, of the impression, which is produced, of the lapse of a longer period than three or four hours, and critics have found it hard to believe that " Ferdinand is wrecked, wanders over the island searching for his father, falls in love, is 'austerely punish'd,' *i. e.*, is thoroughly tested and tried, is betrothed, has a masque performed for his pleasure, and plays chess, all in one wonderful afternoon :" and they have asked, " What are the fewest minutes in which one could fall in love and propose, or be proposed to, and arrange everything satisfactorily ? Of course, we have heard of people loving at first sight, but what of proposing at first sight ?" And, alas, they have fallen into the delusion that Shakespeare's time is 'double time !'

There is, besides, Prospero's promise to Ariel, in I. ii., that he shall be discharged '*after two days*,' which he modifies in his 'aside' in the same scene, when Ferdinand is brought before him : " I 'll free thee *within two days* for this." The time of Ariel's service has drawn quite near the close at the end of Act IV, for Prospero tells him—

" Shortly shall all my labours end, and thou
Shalt have the air at freedom : for a little,
Follow, and do me service."

At the end of Act V, the kind master actually grants the freedom of the Spirit, indenting on his services but for the voyage of the next morning :

" My Ariel,—chick,—
That is thy charge : then to the elements
Be free, and fare thee well ! "

Now, how do we jump over two days, or even one day, to reach the time of Ariel's emancipation ?

The truth is—the duration of the action in *The Tempest* does cover a period of more than three or four hours, and the incidents do take place in

the natural progress of time, though, with a view to produce the impression of continuity in the action, the dramatist has, by creating *apparent* links between similar incidents, disguised the interval of a whole day and thrown readers and spectators alike into the meshes of a maze. Let us proceed to discover the way out.

1. The duration of the action in this drama is about *thirty hours,* commencing from the noontide hour when the royal fleet encounters the tempest and closing about six o' clock on the evening of the next day. The timing of the incidents witnessed in the scenes is shown below:—

I. i. *First day*—between 12 noon and 1 p. m.
[Ship-Master, Boatswain, Mariners, Alonso, Sebastian, Antonio, Ferdinand, Gonzalo, and others—on board a Ship. A storm, with thunder and lightning.]

ii. *First day*—between 1-45 and 2-15 p. m.
[Prospero and Miranda, before the cell. *Enter* and *re-enter* Ariel. *Enter* Caliban. *Re-enter* Ariel with Ferdinand.]

II. i. *First day*—after 2-15 p. m.
[Alonso, Sebastian, Antonio, Gonzalo, Adrian, Francisco, and others, in another part of the Island. *Enter* and *re-enter* Ariel.]

ii. *Second day*—between 1-30 and 1-45 p. m.
[Caliban, with a burden of wood, in another part of the Island. A storm. *Enter* Trinculo. *Enter* Stephano.]

III. i. *Second day*—between 1-45 and 2 p. m.
[Before Prospero's cell. Ferdinand, bearing a log. *Enter* Miranda; Prospero, watching them from a distance, unseen.]

ii. *Second day*—between 2 and 2-15 p. m.
[Caliban, Stephano and Trinculo, in another part of the Island. *Enter* Ariel.]

iii. *Second day*—between 2-15 and 2-30 p. m.
[Alonso, Sebastian, Antonio, Gonzalo, Adrian, Francisco, and and others. *Enter* Prospero above, invisible. *Enter* several strange Shapes, bringing in a banquet. Thunder and lightning. *Enter* Ariel, the banquet disappears.]

IV. i. *Second day*—between 2-30 and 3 p. m.
[Prospero, Ferdinand, and Miranda, before the cell. *Enter* Ariel. The masque. *Re-enter* Ariel with Caliban, Stephano, and Trinculo, all wet. *Enter* diverse spirits in shape of hounds and hunt them about.]

V. i. *Second day*—between 5-30 and 6. p. m.
[Prospero and Ariel, before the cell. *Re-enter* Ariel with Alonso, Gonzalo, Sebastian, Antonio, etc. The entrance of the cell opens, and discovers Ferdinand and Miranda, playing at chess. *Re-enter* Ariel with the Master and Boatswain. *Re-enter* Ariel, driving in Caliban, Stephano, and Trinculo, in their stolen apparel.]

2. To understand everything clearly, one should note both what is shown in the above scenes, and what takes place between and behind them.

Ariel, with his troupe of spirits, raises a tempest at sea in pursuance of Prospero's command (Prospero had told Ariel that the important work he was taking in hand would come to a close at six o'clock on the evening of *the next day*) and wrecks the king's ship between 12 noon and 1 p. m.; all the men on board, except the mariners, leap into the waters: (I. i.) Ariel then lands the king's son, Ferdinand, by himself, and leaves him 'cooling the air with sighs in an old angle of the isle.' The king and his company are likewise landed safe and dispersed in troops about the isle. Stephano is brought on his 'butt of sack' and Trinculo is helped to swim ashore, and each of these is by himself in a remote corner of the isle. The king's ship is safely hid in harbour in a deep nook, and the mariners are 'all under the hatches stow'd' and left asleep under a charm. The rest of the royal fleet have met again and are on the Mediterranean, 'bound sadly home for Naples, supposing that they saw the king's ship wreck'd and his great person perish.' Having accomplished this all, Ariel flies to Prospero before the cave (Miranda sleeping beside him) about 2 p. m., and renders him an account of his performances 'to every article' of the bidding. But there's more work to be done—'the time 'twixt six and now must by us both be spent most preciously,'—and the kind master promises to grant Ariel his discharge, *after two days*. And the good Spirit, ever willing, receives a fresh command (which the master whispers in his ear)—to conduct Ferdinand into the presence of Miranda (who presently awakes)—and departs immediately. Before he returns, Caliban is called out and despatched to fetch some fuel, though there is enough at home (he must not see the new-comer). Ariel presently conducts Ferdinand near to Miranda, and Prospero is so pleased with the Spirit's intelligent work, he says to himself, "Spirit, fine spirit! I 'll free thee *within two days* for this." Ferdinand and Miranda 'change eyes' and conceive a love for each other at the very first sight, but the wise father would make the 'swift business' uneasy 'lest too light winning make the prize light:' and to stimulate and prove their mutual love, he charges the prince as a spy on the island, and subdues him by his charms. Ariel is then sent out with fresh commands. The time is about 2-15 p. m. (I. ii.)

The fresh commands evidently are to charm Caliban with sleep which shall continue until noon of the following day, so he may not return to the cell; to do the same with Stephano and Trinculo; and to bring the king's party together and charm all but Antonio and Sebastian with sleep. This last alone is shown to us, and the treachery of the waking pair being promptly prevented, the royal party proceeds in further search of the king's son: (II. i.). Ariel is no doubt presently sent back by Prospero to charm the king and his company with sleep from which they shall not awake until about the same hour on the next day: and this done, the good Spirit is by the master's side again before it is 3 p. m.

From this hour until noon on the next day, Prospero and Ariel do not concern themselves about the king's party or the mariners, all of them being under the magic sleep. The most urgent and important thing to be done is to prove and strengthen the love of Ferdinand and Miranda

for each other; and no doubt, both Prospero and Ariel spend the rest of that evening " most preciously " to that end. What plans the old man invents and how the Spirit's services are utilised in working them ; whether and for how long Ferdinand is actually imprisoned; what difficulties the father throws in the way of the lovers and what opportunities he gives them for love-making ; what severe tasks he sets the prince to perform—all this we are not permitted to see or know. We only learn that the poor suitor is on the morrow following enjoined to pile up some heavy logs of wood and has to do a whole heap of some thousands before sunset.

Satisfied with the willingness and patience with which, for Miranda's sake, the suitor applies himself to the painful labour imposed upon him, and pleased with the maiden's solicitude on his account, Prospero goes into his study at noon on the Second day and engages himself for a while with his books. About 1-30 p. m., the spell is removed from Caliban as well as from Trunculo and Stephano, and a sudden storm is created, which, they fancy, is a renewal of that which wrecked the ship an hour since. The storm having blown over, all three drink until they are red-hot and conceive a conspiracy for the mastery of the island: (II. ii.). Ariel presently watches their plot and learns Caliban's proposal to conduct his new king (Stephano) to the cell of his master and yield him asleep. (III. ii.) Ariel charms them with his tabor and leads them through ' tooth'd briars, sharp furzes, pricking goss, and thorns ' which enter their frail shins, and leaves them at last in the ' filthy mantled pool ' beyond Prospero's cell, there dancing up to the chins.

Meanwhile, Prospero has secretly watched, with pleasure and satisfaction, the progress of Miranda's and Ferdinand's love-making, (III. i.), and has decided to bring matters to their conclusion. The royal party are roused from their magic slumbers, and they naturally fancy they are continuing the search (of the previous day) for Ferdinand. Prospero presently mocks them with a banquet, and Ariel appears as a harpy and removes it away dexterously, and denounces the misdeeds of the three sinners. They are charmed into a distracted mood and run about in ecstasy, while the rest follow them and guard them: (III. iii.)

Ferdinand has not finished his pile yet, but he has ' strangely stood the test ' and trial of his love. Prospero can no longer command the heart to put off his paternal sanction to the mutual choice of the rare lovers, and he joins their hands once and again in token of their betrothal. They are now free to sit and talk together as betrothed lovers awaiting the solemnization of their marriage, and are presently entertained to a masque, enacted by Ariel and his fellow-sprites, in which all the blessings of Ceres, Iris, and Juno are promised to the betrothed pair: (IV. i.)

Prospero then leaves the lovers to themselves and turns his attention to the foul conspiracy (now ripe for action) of the beast Caliban and his confederates, against his life. The fellows are hunted by Prospero's servant-sprites, disguised as hounds and dogs, and are driven out, and pinched and ground with cramps and convulsions: (IV. i.)

It is now 3 p. m. Prospero has had no rest all this afternoon, and he retires for a while, leaving the lovers in the happy company of each other. His heart's wish has been fulfilled, and there is now no danger from anybody: and it is well that the sinners should be allowed some time to repent their evil deeds and intentions. The *dénouement* is effected between 5-30 and 6 p. m., and freed from spells and enchantment, every one thinks it is the day of the mysterious ship-wreck, and only three hours have elapsed since! And Ariel's freedom is declared from the next morning when he is to do his last office and provide a calm sea and auspicious gale for the royal ship: (V. i.)

"A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM"

The puzzle in this drama is as to the efflux of the interval of *four days*, indicated in the opening speech of Theseus as the period which is to elapse before the day fixed for his nuptials. In this speech (I. i.), Theseus not only speaks of his nuptials which are to take place 'four days' hence, but gives orders to the Master of the Revels to go 'stir up the Athenian youth to merriments' against his marriage-day. That day is likewise to be the day on which Hermia must express her decision. Further on, the same scene witnesses the conversation between Hermia and Lysander, in the course of which the lover proposes that she shall steal forth her father's house '*to-morrow night*' to meet him in the wood outside the city, and take refuge at his widowed aunt's house, there to be married. In I. ii., the 'rude mechanicals' decide to meet '*to-morrow night*' in the same wood, to rehearse the play they are to get up for Theseus' nuptial-night. Acts II and III describe the dreamy adventures and occurrences of the next night ('*to-morrow night*') in the wood. Act IV takes us to the dawn and early morning in continuation, and Theseus asks (IV. i.), "Is not this the day that Hermia should give answer of her choice?" and receives the reply from Egeus that it is. Theseus' marriage takes place in the temple later on, the same morning, and the other couples are likewise 'knit.' Act V witnesses the performance of the mechanicals at the Duke's palace. Now, the question is, When and how have the *four days* elapsed?

The solution is not far to seek. An interval is provided in the middle of I. i. which is in fact a double scene. The first half—in which Theseus commands Hermia to make up her mind, one way or the other, before his nuptial-day, which is four days hence—takes place *in the palace of the Duke*. The second half—in which Lysander and Hermia agree to meet in the wood 'to-morrow night'—does *not* takes place *in the palace*, neither is it a continuation of the first half. There is an interval of two days between the two halves, the meeting of Lysander and Hermia taking place just two days before the day fixed for Theseus' nuptials. That this interval has elapsed is clear from the very first words of Lysander to Hermia:

> "How now, my love! why is your cheek so pale?
> How chance the roses there do fade so fast?"

Hermia had been uneasy at heart since the Duke had commanded her to make her choice, and as there was but one day intervening between then and the final day, she was naturally grown pale with the thought that the course of her love was not going to be smooth, by any means. Then too, it is clear that this meeting of Lysander and Hermia does *not* take place *in the palace*, but *in the street* (*before the palace*), for Helena presently meets them, and Hermia accosts her and asks her whither she is going:

"God speed fair Helena! whither away?"

[The two halves of I. i. are linked together, notwithstanding the interval of time between, so to create the impression of *apparent* continuity in the action; and the link is not perceived because the same curtain is probably made to do service throughout the scene, to represent the *inside* of the palace as well as the *outside* of it, or a street in its vicinity.]

"THE MERCHANT OF VENICE"

The duration of the action in this delightful drama covers a period of *more than three months*—from the day on which Antonio executes the bond in favour of Shylock, payable three months after date, to the day of the trial which takes place some days after the bond has become due and been forfeited. The intervals of time are however so artfully disguised and bridged over that the events *seem* to occur in close consecution, and all in a brief period of time. As usual, the poet creates the impression of *apparent* continuity in the action by subtle links between similiar and allied circumstances, and he leaves so much to imagination that, if the links are not perceived and the gaps are not properly filled up, you see but the bare threads of a story botched together, full of knots and irregularities. The several incidents described in the drama take place in the following order of time:

I. i. The day of the execution of the bond—morning.
ii. do. morning, later on. *Prince of Morocco's arrival reported.*
iii. do. do. later on.
[*Interval of about a week*]
II. i. The day of Bassanio's feast—morning. *The Prince of Morocco*
ii. do. afternoon, between 2 and 3 p. m. [*visits Portia.*
iii. do. do. about 3 p. m.
iv. do. do. about 4 p. m.
v. do. evening about 5 p. m.
vi. do. night abt. 9. p. m. *Bassanio sails to Belmont* abt. 10 p. m.
vii. The next day—morning. *The Prince of Morocco makes his*
viii. do. do. later on. [*choice of the caskets.*
ix. do. afternoon. *The Prince of Arragon elects.*
[*Bassanio's arrival is reported.*
[*Interval of about 9 weeks* bringing the time to a fortnight of the ma-
[turity of the bond.

III. i. On a day, a fortnight before the due date of the bond.
[*Interval of a little over a fortnight.* The due date is past.]
ii. Two days before Antonio's trial. Bassanio makes his choice of the caskets; *sets off for Venice at nightfall.*
iii. On the morning of the day before Antonio's trial. *Bassanio has [not yet reached Venice.*
iv. do. later on. *Portia leaves Belmont.*
v. do. later on—just before dinner.
IV. i. The trial day—morning.
ii. do. immediately after the trial.
V. i. do. commences before midnight and continues to 4 a. m.

Let us now understand the incidents described in the above scenes, in the light of those which are hidden from our view.

Act I takes place on the morning of one and the same day, viz., the day of the execution of the bond. In sc. i, which takes place before dinner-time (l. 70), Antonio tells his friend Bassanio to go inquire where the money needed for the latter's love-enterprise could be borrowed, and himself promises to go out presently on the same business. In sc. iii., which takes place about an hour afterwards and likewise before dinner-time (l. 28), the two friends are with Shylock who agrees to lend the money, the terms are settled, and the bond is to be drawn up directly. In sc. ii, which must necessarily take place in the interval between scenes i and iii, we are taken to Portia's mansion at Belmont. That scene gives us an account of the first 'parcel' of six wooers who have all made up their minds to go away without choosing of the caskets (ll. 88-93). Two of them—the Neapolitan prince and the County Palatine—are Portia's countrymen and are evidently ashamed to see her and take leave of her, having already acquainted her maid with their inability to run any risk by their choice; but the *four strangers* (the French, English, Scotch, and German lords) seek for the lady 'to take their leave' (ll. 110-11): and we learn that a *fifth stranger*—the Prince of Morocco—is to arrive '*to-night.*' The scene likewise contains a hint about the suitor who is finally destined to win Portia, and who has not yet arrived though he should have been among the first comers. [Note.—'*County Palatine*' undoubtedly refers to an Italian Count whose territory is situated about the 'Palatine hill, one of the seven hills of Rome, once occupied by the palace of the Cæsars.' Johnson's surmise that the allusion is to 'the Count Albertus a Lasco, a Polish Palatine, who visited England in our author's life-time' is clearly wrong: so is Hunter's emendation of 'other *four*' (ii. 115) into 'other *six*, on the supposition that Shakespeare originally described onl[illegible] added the English and Scottish lords when revising the play, the [illegible]tter to please his audience, but forgot to alter *four* into *six!* The truth is that there are only *four* lords who are *strangers*, and the poet silently indicates a difference in character and conduct even among the first 'parcel' of six wooers who are scarcely chivalrous.]

A short interval, say, of a week, is indicated at the close of Act I. Having obtained the requisite funds, Bassanio loses no time in making

the necessany purchases (II. ii. 154) and equipping himself suitably to his rank. He engages a retinue of followers, gives them 'rare new liveries' (II. ii. 99, 140) and gives orders for more liveries to be made (II. ii. 105). Launcelot Gobbo, evidently attracted by Bassanio's liberality and wishing to take up service under him, has already picked a quarrel with his master, and Shylock, too, pleased with the idea of his joining the service of Bassanio—so to 'help him to waste his borrowed purse' (II. v. 49-50)—has already recommended the fellow to Bassanio (II. ii. 131). The news is just beginning to spread that a richly-laden ship of Italy (no one could say it was Antonio's) had miscarried 'in the narrow seas that part the French and the English' (II. vii. 27-30): a Frenchman spoke of it to Salarino (Antonio's friend), and Shylock had also heard of the accident and begun to hope it was Antonio's vessel, for, in Jessica's hearing, he swore to Tubal and to Chus 'that he would rather have Antonio's flesh than twenty times the value of the sum that he did owe him:' (III. ii. 281-5). On the eve of his departure to Belmont, Bassanio is preparing a grand supper and entertainment for his 'best-esteemed acquaintance' (II. ii. 155-6), and Act II begins on this day of Bassanio's feast.

The above interval between Acts I and II, which is absolutely necessary for the development of the plot, is artfully disguised by means of the links furnished through the Prince of Morocco. For, in I. ii., we have the report of his approaching arrival 'to-night,'—in II. i., he pays his visit to Portia and is told, first to go to the temple and take his oath, and after dinner to make his hazard (ll. 44-5),—and in II. vii., he actually proceeds to make his choice of the caskets: all which create the impression that the incidents take place consecutively, without any interval. Then again, we find the hour indicated in II. vi. 63 as being 9 p. m., which would time II. vii. (the Prince of Morocco's choice of the caskets) to take place later still *at night* (a manifest absurdity) if the Prince proceeds to his choice on the same day, in pursuance of II. i. 44-5. The hour of II. viii. and ix. is likewise puzzling, unless the interval and the course of incidents is properly followed up.

Act II begins on the morning of Bassanio's feast for his friends and closes on the evening of the next day. II. i. takes place in the morning: the Prince of Morocco visits Portia. He had come to Belmont nearly a week since (I. ii. 112) to pay his court to the lady, but having learnt the full details of the strange manner in which she was to be won, and heard too, no doubt, of the wise procedure followed by the 'parcel' of six wooers who had preceded him, he could not easily make up his mind as to what he should do and whether it would not be best for him to go back without seeing the lady at all. At length, however, [illegible]s upon seeing the lady and he tries to woo her in the ordinary fa[illegible]d begs her not to judge him by his complexion (II. i. 1); but Portia flatly tells him that she has no 'right of voluntary choosing' and must abide by her destiny as determined by the lottery of the caskets, and that otherwise he stands as fair a chance for her affections as any comer she has yet looked on (ll. 13-22), upon which the Prince thanks her for her kind words and re-

quests her to lead him to the caskets to try his fortune (ll. 22-24.) This, however, cannot be done, for he has not taken his oath, and Portia tells him—

"You must take your chance,
And either not attempt to choose at all
Or swear before you choose, if you choose wrong
Never to speak to lady afterward
In way of marriage: therefore be advised.
Mor. Nor will not. Come bring me unto my chance.
Por. First, forward to the temple: after dinner
Your hazard shall be made.
Mor. Good fortune then!
To make me blest or cursed'st among men. [*Cornets, and exeunt.*

The Prince goes back to his lodging, considerably disappointed, and begins to ponder upon the example of his predecessors. II. ii. takes place in the afternoon of the same day, between 2 and 3 p. m. Launcelot Gobbo seeks the service of Bassanio and obtains it: he is told to take leave of his old master and then to go to Bassanio's lodging (ll. 139-40). Bassanio's supper for his friends is to be ready by 5 o'clock (ll. 103-4), though it is to commence at six (II. iv. 8). A ship has been specially chartered by Bassanio and he is to set sail that night for Belmont as soon as 'the wind comes about' (II. iv. 64). In II. iii., Launcelot goes to Shylock's house to take leave of him, but not finding him at home, he goes to Bassanio's lodging, carrying with him a letter from Jessica to Lorenzo (her lover) to be secretly delivered to him at Bassanio's supper (ll. 6, 7.) In II. iv., we find him going again to Shylock's to invite him to sup with his new master that night: he meets Lorenzo on the way and delivers the letter to him. The time is 4 p. m. In II. v., Launcelot conveys his new master's invitation to his old master, Shylock, and returns carrying the latter's compliance. The supper commences about 6 p. m.; Gratiano, Lorenzo, Salarino, and Solanio slink away about 8 p. m. (II. iv. 1-3) to disguise themselves for the masque. In II. vi., we find the maskers near Shylock's house, and Jessica, disguised as a boy joins them as a torch-bearer. The time is 9 p. m., and Antonio comes from Bassanio's feast to meet the maskers who have tarried so long:

" Fie, fie, Gratiano! where are all the rest?
'Tis nine o'clock; our friends all stay for you.
No mask to-night: the wind is come about;
Bassanio presently will go aboard:
I have sent twenty out to seek for you."

Lorenzo and Jessica make their escape. Bassanio sails away to Belmont about 10 p. m. Shylock, on going home from the feast, finds his daughter as well as his ducats missing, and raises the Duke with his outcry, and takes him to the harbour to search Bassanio's ship. But the vessel being already under sail, and Antonio having certified that neither Jessica nor

Lorenzo was in the vessel, Shylock goes home raving in the streets and crying aloud about his daughter and the ducats and precious stones which she carried away—a cry which he repeats even on the following morning to the merriment of mischieveous boys; (II. viii. 4-24). In II. vii., which occurs on the morning after the feast, the Prince of Morocco, having decided to accept the venture, takes his oath and proceeds to the choice of the caskets. In II. viii., Salarino and Solanio talk about the outcry of the Jew on the previous night and even in the morning. Salarino was present at the harbour along with Antonio to see Bassanio off. In II. ix., which takes place in the afternoon of the same day, the Prince of Arragon proceeds to makes his choice of the caskets; and a short while after, comes the messenger from Bassanio 'to signify the approaching of his lord.' This brings us to the end of Act II.

An interval af about nine weeks expires before we go to the time at which Act III begins. This would bring it to ten weeks after the execution of the bond, or two weeks before its maturity. During those nine weeks,—Shylock has spent much money in the search for his daughter (III. i. 79); Tubal has returned from Genoa whither he had been sent on information that Jessica was seen there; the rumour about the loss of Antonio's ship has lived 'unchecked' and is confirmed by Tubal (III. i. 87).

Act III commences on a day, a fortnight before the due date of the bond, and concludes at dinner-hour on the day before the trial. In III. i., Shylock is delighted with the prospect of revenge against Antonio and requests his friend, Tubal, to go at once and—though it is yet '*a fortnight before*'—bespeak him an officer to arrest the debtor immediately the bond becomes forfeited.

An interval of a little over a fortnight elapses between III. i. and III. ii. The due date is past, and Antonio, having forfeited his bond, has been arrested and kept in gaol. Shylock has demanded the forfeit and has been plying the Duke morning and night 'impeaching the freedom of the state if they deny him justice,' and the Duke and the magnificoes and twenty merchants have tried in vain to persuade the Jew not to insist on the forfeiture. But what about Bassanio who arrived at Belmont the day after he left Venice, more than *eleven* weeks since (II. ix.)? We find him proceeding to his choice of the caskets in the next scene (III. ii.), after a long stay at Belmont. The reason for the delay we shall presently see, but let us note the subtle art of the dramatist by which he has disguised this long interval of more than eleven weeks. The arrival of Bassanio was reported to Portia in II. ix., and his choice of the caskets, which we naturally assume to take place on the following day, is placed in III. ii., so to produce the impression of *apparent* continuity in time.

In III. ii., Bassanio proceeds to the choice of the caskets, more than eleven weeks after his arrival. Unlike the other suitors, Bassanio has been the guest of Portia all this time. He is not a new-comer to her house, having been there in her father's time 'in company of the Marquis of Montferrat' (I. ii. 100-1) and the seeds of mutual liking were even then sown in the hearts of the would-be lovers. It must have been quite in-

explicable both to Portia and her maid why this most deserving of suitors had not yet made his appearance: and his arrival was undoubtedly a most welcome event. How happy Portia must have felt in her heart that the one man whom she liked and could love should now be in her house as her suitor and guest! yet how very critical her situation, how ironical that her fate has to be settled by the lottery of the caskets! Much as the daughter will not hesitate to surrender herself completely to the rigid terms of her father's will, and much as she believed in the infallible wisdom of her holy father and the ultimate issue of his arrangement, it is but natural that she should postpone the decision as long as possible; for she loves Bassanio and cannot contemplate the possiblity of losing him, without a shudder. She accordingly postpones the ordeal from time to time until eleven weeks have elapsed, and their mutual love has grown to such bounds that further postponement is absolutely unbearable. It is almost pathetic to find the obedient daughter and loving maiden, with all her trust and faith and hope, desiring the prolongation of the painful suspense for a month or two, for a day, or at least for a short while—even after the lapse of eleven weeks—preferring it to the possible calamity of a wrong choice and consequent departure of the winner of her heart. The damsel who had witnessed Morocco's and Arragon's trials with calm and stately indifference can neither suppress her agitation nor conceal her love at the moment of Bassanio's ordeal:

"I pray you, tarry: pause a day or two
Before you hazard; for in choosing wrong,
I lose your company: therefore forbear a while.
There's something tells me (but it is not love),
I would not lose you; and you know yourself,
Hate counsels not in such a quality.
But lest you should not understand me well
(And yet a maiden hath no tongue but thought),
I would detain you here some month or two
Before you venture for me. I could teach you
How to choose right, but then I am forsworn;
So will I never be: so may you miss me;
But if you do, you'll make me wish a sin,
That I had been forsworn. Beshrew your eyes,
They have o'er-look'd me, and divided me;
One half of me is yours, the other half yours,—
Mine own, I would say; but if mine, then yours,
And so all yours! Oh, these naughty times
Put bars between the owners and their rights!
And so, though yours, not yours.—Prove it so,
Let fortune pay the due for it,—not I.
I speak too long; but 'tis to peize the time,
To eke it, and to draw it out in length
To stay you from election."

And after some loving banter, she sends him to his ordeal, with words full of hope and faith—

"If you do love me, you will find me out."

The long interval which the poet has thus provided between the arrival of Bassanio and his ordeal is absolutely necessary to invest what otherwise must be considered a capricious decree of an insane parent with the protective wisdom of a pious soul's inspiration : for, the mutual love of Bassanio and Portia, grown by company into a powerful guiding and revealing force, and acting, let us fancy, in unison with some mysterious, sacred virtue provided by the holy father, can alone direct the suitor's thoughts to the casket which should stamp him the happy winner of the prize.

Under ordinary circumstances, Portia would have put off the solemnization of her marriage for a few days, at least until her cousin Bellario got well (and of course she knew, being so near, he was laid up with illness) and the event would have been celebrated with considerable pomp and rejoicing. But the news which arrives even at the very moment of their first joy, concerning the sad plight of Antonio, does not permit the postponement of the marriage, for Bassanio must be clothed with the right to use the wife's money as his own before he is sent to save his friend by offering the Jew double, quadruple, or twenty times the sum due to him. They accordingly go to church at once, and Bassanio sets out for Venice about nightfall. Portia does not however feel happy at heart, for, though she hastened Bassanio's departure under the impression that the Jew could be bought over by a tempting bait to his avarice, she soon realises the full extent of Antonio's danger, and Jessica and Lorenzo confirm her fears. How is it possible then to save the good friend ?—this is the thought which fills her soul when she goes to bed, and no wonder she awakes almost with an inspiration. Her quick wit, keen intelligence, and the passing acquaintance she has made with the quibbles and subtleties of law through her intimacy with her learned cousin, these now come to her aid, and she discovers in the terms of the bond a loop-hole for Antonio's escape. It does not discourage her in the least that Bellario is not available to go to Venice and argue the cause before the Duke, for she feels quite equal to the task of disguising herself and conducting the defence. (And she is by no means a stranger to courts and forms, having attended a few trials along with her cousin, and it was often her pastime to turn over the pages of his ponderous volumes and play the lawyer before him). She accordingly runs her man in the morning to Bellario, to inform the doctor of her purpose and solicit a note of introduction to the Duke, together with the necessary garments and any instructions he may deem necessary. This man is to meet her at the 'ferry which trades to Venice'—some twenty miles off—whither she and Nerissa presently proceed in a coach. On the way, however, a fresh aspect of the case presents itself to her acute mind, upon which it is necessary to consult her cousin and arm herself with authorities : Is it possible that an attempt against the life of a citizen of Venice can constitute no offence under the law ? Bellario must be con-

sulted on this point, and Portia drives across to Padua ; and her visit (to which the doctor refers in his letter, IV. i. 149) is not in vain. For she learns that Bellario's aid has already been summoned by the Duke and it is an unexpected luck that Portia could now go in his stead and with his recommendation as 'a young doctor of Rome :' and with the benefit of the learned cousin's opinion about the flaw in the bond as well as the authorities he gives her upon the point of law, she goes to Venice with a double assurance of success and presents herself before the Duke on the next morning just as the trial is proceeding. She leaves the place immediately after the trial (IV. i. 395-6) and reaches home about 3 a. m. on the next morning : (V. i.). Bassanio and Antonio, too, seeing that the young doctor and his clerk do not accept their invitation to dinner, set out earlier than they at first intended (IV. i. 448-9) and reach Belmont almost at the same time as Portia : (V. i.)

OTHER PLAYS

It is needless to continue this examination any further : suffice it to say that the efflux of time can be traced and followed in every play, and all intervals—long or short, vague or definite—which are disguised by the subtle art of the dramatist can easily be discovered when the incidents depicted are well and properly interpreted in the light of those which are suppressed and left to imagination.

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